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Museum As A Platform For A Speculative Investigation: Exploring The Possibilities For A Postcolonial Museum Through Practice-Led Research

by

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A Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For The Degree Of

Master of Design

In the

Department of Art and Design
University of Alberta

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Summer 2014

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore the performative dimensions of cultural heritage in order to express its lively nature and in so doing push representation toward a primary mode of experience. Investigation of the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges facilitates this task, as it challenges Western reductionist perspectives regarding the complex fabric of cultural heritage in a postcolonial context. I argue that investigating how to express the embodied knowledges/liveliness of things is a valuable way of yielding an opening for different ethical and aesthetic considerations in regards to how we represent things. In connection to this I address the museum's engagement with cultural difference and the exclusive authority of an expert discourse, while foregrounding, instead, alternative practices and ways of knowing that exist beside each other.

Acknowledgments

I feel lucky and thankful for all the support, guidance, learning, and insights I have received in the exciting and challenging process of making of this thesis.

I want to thank Gavin Renwick, my supervisor, and Natalie Loveless, who followed my work from the beginning. This thesis is greatly inspired by and indebted to their wisdom, guidance and support. I want to thank Judy Half and Thomas Andrews for our inspirational conversations, resources and suggestions, as well as, Lucian Gomoll for his challenging and insightful comments, Karl Davis for his edits, Kenny Horne for his kind help in the Industrial Design Workshop and Robert Lederer and Susan Colberg for always being there when I need any kind of help or advice. I feel grateful to have had such wonderful graduate colleagues: Layal Shuman, Salim Azzam, Kasia Koziarz, Piyush Mann and Ceren Pektas, they have been amazing company and made this journey more fun.

I am especially grateful to my mother Lela Koncar for her loving and generous support that I have been receiving from her through out my life and I feel blessed and grateful beyond words for having my love Joseph Fredrich in my life who selflessly, generously and lovingly supported, helped, inspired, guided me and believed in me. Love, you are everything to me.

This thesis was written and produced while I was pregnant with my daughter Dita Freya.

I dedicate this work to her.

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Introduction

My first visit to the Indigenous gallery of the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) was filled with feelings of unease and resistance. Ever since I was a child I have felt intense resistance and boredom when visiting natural history museums and ethnographic collections (as opposed to art galleries and museums). Especially disturbing were the dioramas; photographically frozen hyper-realistic human figures and taxidermied animals posed in life-like situations, their inevitable decomposition being slowed, in my mind, by the heavy, dusty, temperature-controlled air. Given this, nothing could be further from my mind than working on a thesis grounded in the Indigenous Gallery of the RAM. However, at the time of my first visit I was working on a university assignment revolving around the RAM which forced me to deal with my feelings of unease, dig into them and recalibrate myself more constructively in order to succeed in the course assignment.[1] What had an unsettling and

[1] This was a project at the end of my first year as an industrial design graduate student at the University

then sedating effect on me was the abundance of scenographic elements and explanatory labels used to tell a somewhat synthetic story about the First Nations' cultures which in turn distracted me from engagement with the artifacts and their own biographies and contingencies. On my reading this synthesis is achieved by establishing thematic categories in the display that responds to Western sensibility rather than First Nations.[2] These categories are titled: 'Living with the Land', 'Fur Trade and Early Contact', 'Dividing the Land', 'Immigration, Settlement, Agriculture/Ranching', 'Resource Era' and 'Negotiating Identities and Aboriginal Resurgences.'

What also drew my attention was a stylized crack motif featured in the entrance of the gallery, the display plinths, the framing display cases, the info panels, and the decorative scenographic elements which provided a backdrop for the exhibition narrative (Fig. 1, 2, 3 and 4). The same stylistic treatment of the entrances to the Aboriginal Culture and Natural History gallery is reminiscent of turn-of-the-century colonial museum practice which treated Indigenous cultures as part of natural history collections (MacKenzie 2009). Two stylized cracks in the wall reveal the cave-like entrances on opposite sides of the wide space of the museum's second floor. One takes you into the world of natural history (minerals, rocks, collections of dead and live insects, and taxidermied birds) (Fig. 1) and the other, different only in the title above it, takes you into the Aboriginal Culture gallery (Fig. 2 and 3). From a

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of Alberta in the 2012-13 academic year in the class Des 681: Theory and Research in Design Studies II.

[2] I use 'Western' to refer to culture, sociopolitical norms, and philosophy of European origin, informed by tradition of rational thought and Cartesian dualism that formed the basis of the North American settler experience.

design perspective, I asked: how do these elements facilitate the story about First Nations cultures and from whose perspective?

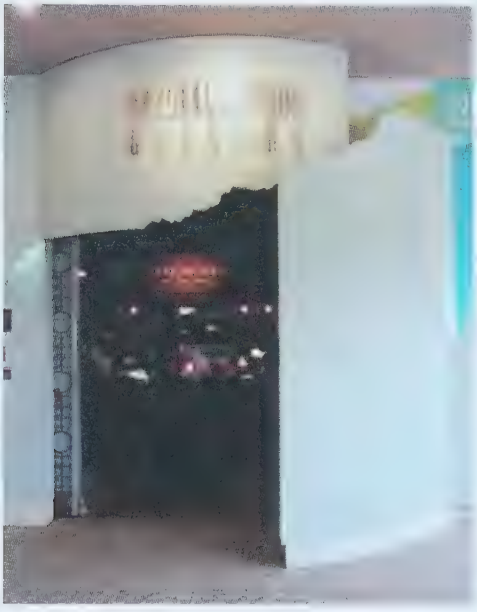

Fig. 1: Entrance to Natural History Gallery (RAM)

Fig. 2: Entrance to the Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Culture (RAM)

Fig. 3: View of the RAM's second floor from inside the gallery

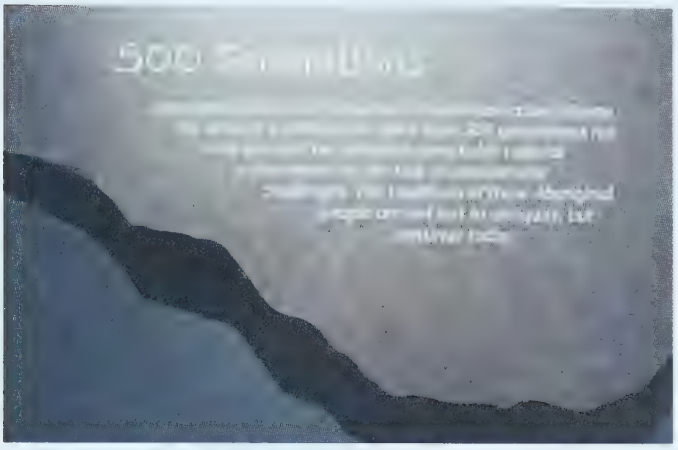

Fig. 4: Introduction panel at the entrance to the Aboriginal Gallery in the RAM

Working on another design project some years ago I read a short article describing how scientists still cannot determine in which direction a crack will continue once it is created. This quality of unpredictability was central to the message of the previous project, which evolved around the resilience of plants in urban areas and their incredible adaptability, enabled by tiny cracks, to take over concrete areas (Fig. 5). The crack featured in the RAM's First Nations gallery transmits a different message. Even though museum acknowledges a living culture, stylized element transmits a different message (Fig. 4). The RAM's crack is decorative, romantic, and nostalgic – even a bit cartoon-like – providing a backdrop of a stylized past-nature for a spatial narrative about the First Nations' cultures. If the intention is to emphasize First Nations traditional environmental knowledges, the crack motif so generously applied and highlighted throughout the display does not do it. Instead, it is reminiscent of nineteenth century narratives that represented 'Native as an evolutionary step of the Western', and the 'Native as traditional, never modern,' (Philips 1998, Reardon and

Tallbear 2012), as well as about the Western aesthetic sensibility that facilitated this pre-modernity as racialized (Roberts 1994, Doxtator 1996).[3]

Fig. 5: The crack motif that serves as a metaphor for opening up museum territory

As a designer, this made me interested in how design participates in the production of racialized identity through instrumentalizing the logic of representation (facilitated by certain design cues and methods) that consequently have a profound effect on the perception of cultures being represented. While this was the beginning of my interest in the topic, it was only in conjunction with papers I was reading for a seminar class on the Pedagogical turn in contemporary art and curating that I decided to pursue this topic for my thesis project.[4] The

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[3] It was also interesting to me to see how the presence of First Nations at the RAM is contained within the gallery space, while, for example, RAM's cafeteria features photographs of white Euro-Canadians from the 1950s and 1960s engaged in different sports and social events under the sign 'Experience Alberta.'

[4] Pedagogical turn is an approach in contemporary art that takes pedagogy seriously in art making. Thus, learning/education, dialogue and participation are materials these practices work with, perform and inhabit in order to allow pedagogical and everyday life to influence each other. The embedded-ness in a practical space, dialogue and exploratory approach whose results are not known in advance are a prerequisite for

processual, intangible nature of contemporary art practices which I was reading about and their commitment to collective production of meaning that "takes place in present" (Rogoff 2007, p. 5) got me interested in the challenge that this poses for modes of representation and appropriate ways of documenting and displaying such works.[5] The readings also helped me perceive the museum as a complex web of relations and potentialities for relational production of knowledge that takes into account diverse perspectives and responds to the multiple and not always consonant needs of community. I decided to focus on how to express a relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges and values within the tangible museum display in a performative manner.[6] Specifically, I asked: how might an object become a catalyst for generating social processes and pedagogic opportunities that facilitate continuity and the remaking of a culture?

Drawn to Puig dela Bellacasa's thinking on how modes of care could change the way technoscientific assemblages are being represented, I want to argue for the importance of examining the representational practices of the RAM's Indigenous gallery and how stories

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the accountability and creation of an original learning disposition and a new condition for knowledge. Pedagogy works through potentiality, actualization and responsiveness to student's/community's needs, and seeks to transform the modes of production of an expert, "top-down," paradigm to an "open source" mode (Rogoff 2007). Works of the Pedagogical turn make a shift away from the structures of objects and consumption towards the processual and intangible nature of any creative enterprise (Claire Bishop 2011).

5 Today, some contemporary art practices such as participatory art "emphasize process over a definitive image, concept or object. It tends to value what is invisible: a group dynamic, social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness" (Bishop 2012, p.6).

6 British linguist and philosopher J. L. Austin proposed the "performative" as one type of utterance that is not descriptive or constative. A performative utterance is itself a form of action that may be followed or accompanied by other actions (mental, physical or utterance of further words) but it cannot be held to the standards of truth and falsehood that govern constative speech. As such it bypasses issues of validity and referentiality (it does not refer to action, but is the action) (Austin, 1975).

about cultures and the world are constructed by the way we represent things."[1] Therefore, it is important to detect what is there or what is given in the thing we are studying and representing. But even more crucial is to think about what is not included and about what this thing could become if other participants were gathered by/in it (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011). How might we change aesthetics and practices of representing the liveliness of things understood through the relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges?

In this thesis I am interested in exploring and foregrounding a performative dimensions of cultural heritage in order to express its lively nature and in so doing push representation toward a primary mode of experience. Investigation of the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges facilitates this task well, as it challenges Western reductionist perspectives on the complex fabric of heritage. I argue that investigating how to express the embodied knowledges/liveliness of things is a valuable way of yielding an opening for different ethical and aesthetic considerations in regards to how we represent things. In what follows I address the museum's engagement with cultural difference and challenge the exclusive authority of an expert discourse, instead foregrounding practices and ways of knowing that exist beside each other.

Certain thinkers (such as Marie Louis Pratt, James Clifford, Mary Nooter Roberts, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, and Coco Fusco to name a few) and their conceptual

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[1] In her essay *Matters of Care in Technoscience: Assembling Neglected Things,* Maria Puig de la Bellacasa envisions care as ethico-political issue and conceptualizes care as methodology in order to encourage an ethos of care in the study of science and technology and suggest how those who study things can participate in their possible becomings. The concept of 'care' as an ethico-political issue reflects upon how things/knowledge is constructed and represented. Thus Puig de la Bellacasa argues ways of studying and representing things has world-making effects (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011).

interventions present important decolonizing gestures of the late twentieth century that contribute to enabling conditions for projects like this one. They provide a terrain for my thesis that is interested in the issues underpinning cross-cultural representation in ethnographic museum collections and the consequences for indigenous peoples and their knowledges when non-Western ways of knowing are marginalized and deemed to have no impact in dominant regimes of knowledge.[8] These thinkers acknowledge the ways that ongoing colonial relations structure museum practices of collecting and display. Such practices are always responses to and products of particular historical, political, social and economic factors and interests (Pratt 1991, Roberts 1994, Fusco 1995, Clifford 1997, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998).[9] Along with insights about the vested nature of expert discourse perceived as neutral and its implication in the fabrication of racial identities, these thinkers foreground importance of understanding heritage through its ongoing contingencies while challenging essentialist notions of authenticity promoted in Western narratives

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[8] This research takes seriously the fact that the activity of cross-cultural representation is in question, now more than ever. While contemporary museums started to promote their postcolonial status in the 1990s through inclusion programs, shared curatorship and use of collections, main critiques of the museum today pertain to its smooth transition into inclusion and collaboration especially when engaging with cultural difference. This expansive inclusiveness becomes problematic when it fails to trouble the museum's ability to insert *others* into narratives of the West (Rogoff 2002, Boast 2011).

[9] "Contact Zone" is one such intervention. In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturation,* Mary Louis Pratt defines the term contact zone as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt in Clifford, 1997, p. 191). James Clifford borrows the term Contact Zone from Pratt "to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored" (Clifford 1997, p.192) and to reflect on the museum's negotiations with source communities in postcolonial times in order to shift away from the "frontier" museum-as-collection concept of universal culture and uncontensted value, instead arguing for the museum as descriptive of "ongoing historical, political, moral *relationships*" (Clifford 1997, p.192).

(Roberts 1994, Fusco 1995, Clifford 1997, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998). These insights provide an important foundation for the design research that informs this thesis.

The problem that I am trying to solve

The focus of this thesis is twofold. I am interested in exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum, but also in creating an opening to enable thinking about this territory through design research.[10] As a designer I have set myself the task of investigating the RAM's engagement with cultural difference by paying attention to design cues in the display. I want to think about the intangible and tangible aspects of heritage together, philosophically and pragmatically, as they challenge certain assumptions and practices of display, representation and knowledge production rooted in rationalist knowledge claims about the world/objects (of knowledge) as inert/passive material reduced to a resource for an active knower (Haraway 1988).[11]

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[10] I am interested in the concept of postcoloniality as the point of departure for a methodologically diverse examination of different trajectories of power, its mechanisms and limits, and the changing ways in which such forms of power are contested (Cooper 2005). I will take seriously the claims of postcolonial critics that a nation can be postcolonial in the sense of being politically independent but neo-colonial by being economically and culturally dependent on its previous colonizers, in the sense that national 'development' has no space for tribal cultures and beliefs (Loomba 1998). The colonizer and colonized are reproduced by institutions that change historically and therefore do not constitute fixed and/or generic categories (Cooper 2005).

[11] Most problematic about objectivity of the Western cultural narrative is that it's unlocatable (therefore unaccountable) and that it defines what can count as knowledge (translates, calibrates, standardizes, splits subject/object). Thus these rationalist knowledge claims act reductively on the subjectivities, agencies and embodied accounts of truth while treating an object of knowledge as a mere passive material and resource for a knower (Haraway 1988).

While I will unpack the relationship between intangible and tangible heritage in more detail in the second chapter let me briefly outline how I understand this relationship and its importance for this thesis. The relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges foregrounds objects as the embodiment of skills and values, and reveals their processual and multidimensional nature relevant for cultural vitality. In this way the object becomes a catalyst for generating ongoing social relations and the remaking of culture. Therefore, for this thesis, engaging with the notion of intangible heritage is important for it challenges Western assumptions about heritage as inert objects understood primarily through material properties and authenticity understood in essentialist terms. It also facilitates a more robust, lively and engaging notion of cultural heritage and inspires new ethical demands and aesthetic modes for representing heritage in ethnographic collections.

A speculative investigation combining theory and design practice serves to develop a more complex understanding of the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges and values with an aim to enable more appropriate representation of indigenous cultures and museum displays and be more sensitive to various forms of knowledge. I will ask: what can we change in the aesthetics and practices of exposing and representing the liveliness of things, carriers of intangible values and knowledges? How could this challenge modes of learning and representation in the museum so that they respond to Indigenous ways of knowing and transmission of culture? And could this shift contribute–practically and conceptually–to the efforts of transforming our philosophical and ethical landscapes towards intercultural frameworks?

An overview of methods

This research is rooted in the idea of design as critical and speculative practice, inseparable from social responsibility, that aims at creating interventions which challenge conventional production and consumption and enhance well-being.[12] I am grounding my research in the Indigenous display at the Royal Alberta Museum with an aim to use it as a conceptual, practical, and metaphorical platform from which to explore the concepts of knowledge, learning/education, signification and representation.[13] The mode of operating as a practice-led researcher-designer allows me to interweave a theoretical overview and performative response through practice.[14] Therefore, the methodological frameworks most fruitful for my inquiry are auto-ethnography, formal analysis and conceptualization through design research methods (diagrams, mapping, conceptual prototyping and modeling). My practical work involves theorizing through practice – making palpable the relationship

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12 Today an increasing number of designers and scholars are aiming for possibilities beyond prescribed mainstream design agendas. Instead they are trying to define noncommercial interrogative, discursive, experimental, transitional and propositional methods of designing with the aim to expose the current state of design while seeking to challenge conventional production and consumption. From a historic perspective Critical Design is discussed as a marginalized practice that operates outside of commercially driven paradigms. Through the work of Anthony Dunn (who initially used it as pedagogical method at the Design Interaction department of RCA) Critical Design became synonymous with a movement that utilized product design as a form of critical investigation motivated by an impulse to reframe the circumstances surrounding contemporary product design and challenged the prevailing perception of what the designer is capable of using product design for (Malpass, 2012).

13 Also, as the RAM is changing its location to downtown Edmonton, importance is given to it and the hopes surrounding it indicate the scope and vitality of its role socially, culturally and politically. This loosening of the frame in words of Irit Rogoff, has pointed me towards using the RAM as a platform for this research (Rogoff 2007).

14 Practice-led research foregrounds practice as a valuable way of doing theory/research. It is topic-driven and develops its methodology accordingly and unprescriptively, which often results in cross- and inter-disciplinary research approaches. It is most often mentioned in connection, but not limited, to art and design research and/or doctoral degrees in creative practices.

between intangible and tangible knowledges and exploring performative ways of representing the intangible in a tangible museum display. Therefore, design as a medium of inquiry serves as an affective, discursive medium that emphasizes a problem's complexity (rather than offering solutions) and facilitates making the issues and concepts visible.

An overview of chapters

In the chapters that follow I offer a mapping of possible ways of thinking about the museum and the way that it captures heritage through situated examples and certain theoretical frameworks that challenge Western epistemological dominance. In chapter one I start by tracing the historical and ideological lineage of natural history museums, as well as their contemporary challenges. My aim here is to denaturalize modes of cross-cultural representation embraced by these institutions and to discern the varying forms of museums' engagement and collaboration with indigenous communities through concepts of 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural difference'. In chapter two I will unpack the relationship of intangible and tangible knowledge/values more generally and especially in regards to the tangible museum displays of the ethnographic collections to enable a more robust, complex, lively and engaging understanding of cultural heritage. I will also consider possible shifts in ethical demands and aesthetic modes for representing heritage in ethnographic collections with a focus on a mode of care. In chapter three I explore performativity as a critical tool/strategy in relation to display design. This facilitates a move away from instrumentalizing modes of representation that interpellate indigeneity through fixed

identities and opening up previously concealed meanings, and pedagogical opportunities. With the overview of chapters I am concluding this introduction and I am inviting you to join me in mapping out a web of possibilities for a postcolonial museum.

Chapter I

In this chapter I trace the historical, intellectual, ideological and political lineage of natural history museums, taking the Royal Alberta Museum as my case study in order to develop a more robust understanding of how and why natural history museums promote certain modes of representation and have foreclosed others. I am interested in what can be changed in the aesthetics and practices of exposing and representing the "lively life of things" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011) in a cultural museum context. In what follows I examine objects of First Nations cultures as carriers of intangible values and knowledges. I argue for the importance of bringing into critical focus the museum's role in institutionalizing Western assumptions about a cultural object's value and authenticity, paying particular attention to modes of representation that act reductively on the complex fabric of a specific cultural heritage (Munjeri, 2004; Candlin, 2008) and thereby speak more to Western values than those of the culture that is being represented (Roberts, 1994; Doxtator, 1996).

Colonial history of display in Canada – Museum as an institution

Let me start by focusing on the historical and ideological underpinnings of natural history museums across the British Empire, and Canada in particular, in order to examine what is specific to natural history museums like the Royal Alberta Museum in relation to the context of a Euro-Canadian colonial history of display. My aim here is to provide a background for further analysis of modes of representation embraced by this paradigm and help in conceptualizing ways to better address First Nations priorities within the museum context.

The so-called colonial museum can be said to be situated within two paradigms of knowledge that dominate the museum age: "natural history" and "ethnography" (Philips, 1998). These two paradigms are fueled by the entanglement of entrepreneurial, political and patriotic urges of the nineteenth century period that include colonial development, burgeoning of the white bourgeois class, passionate private collecting, the desire to enhance public education and culture (often with disciplining characteristics) and scientific objectives (MacKenzie, 2009). The Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 in London, England, for example offered an insight into the possibilities of scientific globalization and indirectly inspired museums around the British Empire. Generally speaking, nineteenth century natural history museums embraced a rationalist paradigm of science that gave a sense of potential knowing, understanding and control through their practices of sorting, viewing, classifying, and naturalizing the remote or unknown, and bringing it into agreement with prior knowledge both geographically and intellectually. This was achieved by taking material culture from

individual communities and by placing it in museums where it was interpreted and offered for viewing. Such museums represented a Western worldview and acted as a point of contact between scientific discourse and popular understanding (MacKenzie, 2009).

Even though nineteenth century colonial museums of natural history across the British Empire shared certain of these commonalities, they were inevitably differently focused from those in Europe and were not sites of rigidly monolithic experience (MacKenzie, 2009; McTavish 2013). Many early museums in settler communities were not immediately recognized as instrumental to the economic and political benefit of colonies and owe their origins to private (natural history) societies or the individuals on which these were dependent (MacKenzie, 2009; McTavish, 2013). This often resulted in museums not achieving the ideal of modernity in monolithic sense, which is often the focus of critique in critical museum studies (MacKenzie, 2009; McTavish, 2013). Nevertheless, the intellectual and ideological framework of these settler natural history museums nurtured the project of conquering colonial lands, promoting interest in the natural history of localities with economic resources and encouraging greater migration and development in the colonies. "Thus natural science, in feeding an inquisitive mental frontier served to open up the acquisitive geographical frontier of the continent" (MacKenzie, 2009, p. 23).

Ethnography emerged alongside natural history within the colonial paradigm. In Canada, development of the transcontinental railway practically and symbolically eliminated the gaps in industrial progress and facilitated the exchange of ideas and people on a national and international scale. The search for resources and exploitation of the environment

revealed natural and human treasures, advancing the proliferation of collecting and leading to an awareness of the artifacts of humans within nature. The emergence of ethnography within natural history and the way each practice fed into the other constitutes an important aspect of colonial museums (McKenzie, 2009).[15]

That said, the ethnographer was not immediately recognized as the best interpreter of native life. In the late nineteenth century the ethnographer was not distinguished from the traveller, missionary and administrator who had been in the field longer and had better research contacts and linguistic skills (Clifford, 1997). It was only during the years 1900 and 1960 that ethnography established itself as a new concept of field research, privileging expert authority while strongly opposing amateurism not informed by scientific hypotheses and neutrality (Clifford, 1983). Epistemological and methodological hierarchies were established by giving distinct primacy to the visual (outsider and objective) observations of the ethnographer over the (interested, insider) interpretation of indigenous authorities. These cultural descriptions by qualified scholars were institutionalized and embodied in a specific textual practice, one that transformed unruly experience (with its multiple subjectivities and

[15] Conversely, through the end of the nineteenth century the archeology of indigenous cultures was left undeveloped due to racial ideas that North American 'Indians' lacked any civilization in the past and that the colonies were empty lands waiting for colonial content (Pratt, 1991; Doxtator, 1998). Indigenous peoples were often viewed and assessed as part of the surrounding natural world and were recognized as part of the landscape of the state, but they were not incorporated into the nation which represented them (MacKenzie, 2009). Given this world-view it is unsurprising that cultural evolutionism rose in popularity in anthropological studies at the beginning of the twentieth century and was applied in studies of material culture and promoted through museum displays (Clifford, 1983), often illustrating the backwardness and disappearance of non-Western peoples under the influence of Western civilization (MacKenzie, 2009). This idea facilitated the assumptions that indigenous heritage was in need of being studied, represented, and persevered before it disappeared or degenerated as a result of contact with the more advanced Euro-Canadian culture (Philips, 1997; Reardon and Tallbear, 2012), consequently impoverishing First Nations communities of their cultural artifacts (Doxtator, 1998; MacKenzie, 2008) and intellectually separating living aboriginal people from the objects of their past (Doxtator, 1998).

political constraints) into an authoritative written account which used rhetorical forms to present the facts as objectively acquired rather than as subjective relations. "Culture was constructed as an ensemble of characteristic behaviors, ceremonies and gestures, susceptible to recording and explanation by a trained onlooker" (Clifford, 1983). By privileging scientific abstraction, arrangement of complex data and generalization over specificities of the production of knowledge, ethnography contributed to homogenizing cultures and conceptual frameworks where indigenous cultural objects were inserted (Clifford, 1983) and reconstituted as art, artifact, craft, or souvenir (Roberts, 1994).

A short outline of the historical lineage of ethnographic collections of museums of natural history and the formation of ethnographic authority demonstrates how neutrality of expert discourse, held as highest priority in museums of natural history, was in fact fueled by politico-economic needs that were (re)articulated as the settlement progressed. For this project it is useful to identify how museums participated in consolidating the racial identity of "the native" through display narratives and classification of indigenous artifacts, and how the neutrality of expert discourse was established. By doing this I want to create more space for other ways of thinking about and representing heritage. In the following section I will present a short historical background of the Royal Alberta Museum (Edmonton, Alberta) that serves as a platform for this research in relation to the lineage of natural history museums and the colonial history of display that I have just sketched out.

History of the Royal Alberta Museum

Unlike natural history museums established in the late nineteenth century, where natural history societies preceded museums that grew organically through their efforts, the Provincial Museum of Alberta was established as a result of a partnership between the federal government's Confederation Memorial Centennial Program and the Government of Alberta. They commissioned architect, Raymond O. Harrison, in 1964 and gave him five million dollars and three years to find a site, hire staff, build collections, construct a museum and prepare exhibits to fill 4000 square meters. The museum was opened to the public on December 6, 1967.

While historically separate from the emergence of the colonial museum, the Provincial Museum of Alberta in its inaugural exhibit featured the natural resources and indigenous artifacts of Alberta in a similar way to that I have just described.[16] This lineage of the museum is still communicated today.

16 "On the Museum's opening day, visitors were introduced to three main floor galleries: Fur Trade, Native Peoples of Alberta, and early photographs of Aboriginal people taken by Ernest Brown and Harry Pollard. Eleven mammals were mounted in the habitat section and several scale models of future dioramas were prepared. Second-floor galleries focused on Agriculture, Pioneer Life and Industry and Commerce" (http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/visit/about/history.cfm, last accessed: May 2014).

Fig. 6: The Stake by John Weaver, depicting a pioneer family locating the corner stake of their new homestead

Fig. 6a and b: "Flight to Egypt" motif throughout history

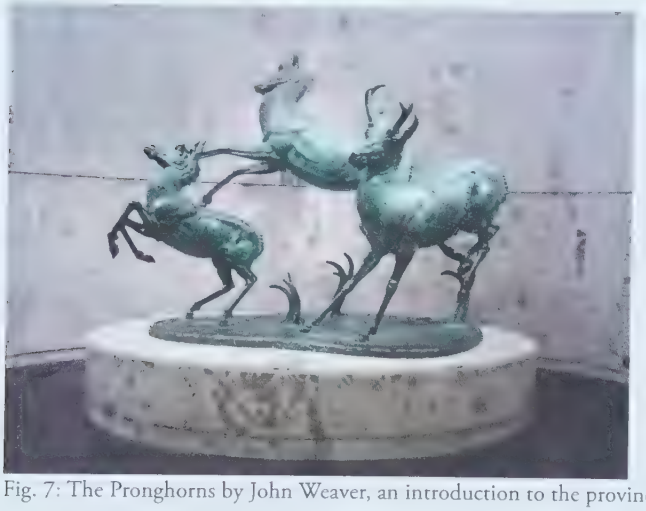

Fig. 7: The Pronghorns by John Weaver, an introduction to the province's wildlife

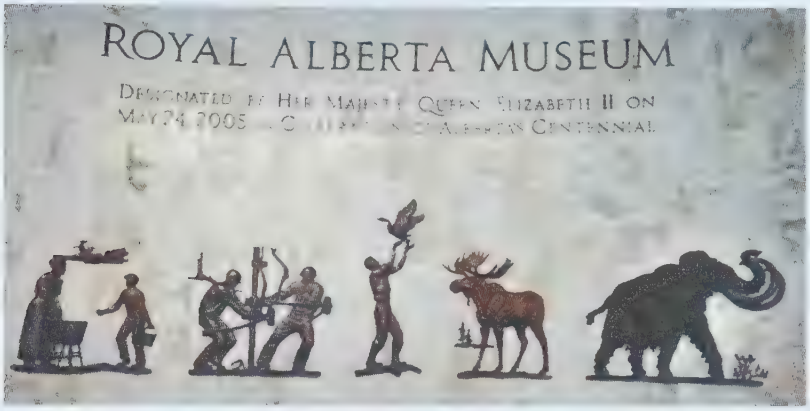

Fig. 8: The Frieze by John Weaver at the RAM's reception

Two heroic-sized sculpture groups are featured near the reception introducing the two curatorial wings of the Museum: Human History, depicting a pioneer family locating the corner stake of their new homestead (Fig. 6), and Natural History, an introduction to the province's wildlife (Fig. 7). The bronze sculptures feature idealized bodies in a realistic style suggesting the idea of settler strength, progress and conquering or cultivation of the new land (Fig. 6), opposed to the romantically depicted wildness of nature (Fig. 7).[17] Similarly, the bronze relief above the reception idealizes resource-industry-oriented practices (Fig. 8). Thus, though produced between the years 1964-7, motifs, content and style strongly resemble the turn-of-the-century ideals of the settler mentality.

Through the late 1960s and 1970s the museum expanded continuously due to a favorable political and economic climate in Alberta. This benefited the establishment of

[17] Separation of nature and culture as straightforward binary categories and a dream of natural wilderness is another frontier category in the lineage of settler societies (Haraway 2007). These categories of nature and culture have created a radical simplification of ontology and further self-replicating binaries (mind/matter, subject/object) (Cruikshank 2012).

museum societies, the development of the Museum's habitat dioramas and an increase in curatorial programs and staff, while adding major exhibits at the rate of about one a year until 1979 (http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/visit/about/history.cfm, last accessed: May 2014).[18] According to the RAM's website, in the 1980s the museum played a vital role in the dissemination of information about Alberta through guides, interpretive programs and curatorial research in professional journals and received national recognition for its curation of Natural History collections. But a decline in the economy and government spending and an increasingly competitive marketplace (the expansion of shopping malls and the entertainment industry, and the introduction of admission fees) presented a challenge to the museum, which infused it with an entrepreneurial spirit. The RAM undertook a major renovation plan in order to enlarge its display capacities and sought corporate and media partners to make the touring exhibitions, feature exhibition projects, and the permanent gallery renewals possible. The ground floor Indian Gallery was dismantled to create space for large feature exhibitions that brought travelling collections from across North America, Europe and Asia (http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/visit/about/history.cfm, last accessed: May 2014). In 2005 Queen Elizabeth II visited the museum bestowing royal patronage, which led to renaming the museum from Provincial Museum of Alberta to the Royal Alberta

[18] During this period the museum was also instrumental in establishing an association that fosters the development of museums in Alberta (today known as Museums Alberta). Shortly after, the Friends of the Provincial Museum Society was established. The society was involved in fundraising, public and school programs and collection acquisitions. For more than ten years the museum featured a Travelling Exhibits Program utilizing a series of customized tractor-trailers that enabled exhibits to travel locally, provincially and nationally (http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/visit/about/history.cfm, last accessed: May 2014).

Museum (http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/visit/about/history.cfm, last accessed: May 2014).

Presently, the RAM is in the process of moving its location to downtown Edmonton where it will share public space with art galleries, shopping malls, hotels and government buildings. The construction work on the Old Post Office building that will be repurposed into the RAM premises started in February 2014 and was marked by a ceremony held to honor the fact that the new Museum will be built on Treaty 6 land (Fig. 9).[19] The opening is planned for December 2017. The importance given to the project and the hopes surrounding it indicate the scope and vitality of the museum's role socially, culturally and politically.[20] While the current stone-faced building of the RAM, monumental and temple-like in appearance, seems impenetrable (Fig. 10), the future premises (Fig. 11) feature a lighter structure of predominantly steel and glass, suggesting transparency and a connection between the inside and outside space. This aesthetic treatment and appearance of the building communicates a more open, sociable and inviting character for the institution than the current museum does. It is a visual language that suggests a direction more aligned with museum trends that promote inclusion, collaboration and the changing status of modern museums in Western culture, which is expected to attract a wider public (Rogoff, 2002;

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19 Treaty 6 is an agreement between the Canadian monarch and First Nations of the central area of the current provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta signed in the 1880s. For the Canadian Government land treaties were a way to neutralize possible resistance of the communities, to extinguish First Nations' title and secure governance over certain areas, while offering First Nations nominal assistance in adapting to new ways of living. First Nations were forced to consider treaties as the instrument for retaining some control over their territories as settlers were destroying their accustomed means of survival and diminishing resources they depended on (http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028706/1100100028708, accessed: June 2014).

20 "We're Building Alberta for all Albertans" – Heather Kilmchuck, Minister of Alberta Culture

Boast, 2011; McTavish, 2013). Nevertheless it will be interesting to see whether the change of the visual character of the institution – from introverted and not revealing its content to extroverted, visually transparent – will translate to and actualize in the practices of the RAM and its exhibitions.

Fig. 9: New RAM construction site, Edmonton, AB, photograph courtesy of Gavin Renwick

Fig. 10: Present Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton, AB

Fig. 11: Rendering of the new Royal Alberta Museum planned for 2017, Edmonton, AB

Shifts in Canadian Museology

A short outline of shifts in Canadian Museology that began in the 1980s is important for this discussion because it brings into question the perceived neutrality of museum discourse and positions it as a site of postcolonial critique. These shifts prompted museums to reexamine their implication in cross-cultural representations produced through colonial narratives and to consider collaborative modes of working with source communities.[21] Conditions produced through these shifts are important for this project because they make visible concerns, epistemologies, priorities and sensibilities voiced by the communities in question. This yielded an opening for a more complex understanding of heritage and for initially foreclosed representational possibilities.

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[21] In Canada increasingly effective Aboriginal activism and resistance to colonial policies that intensified during the 1960s posed the challenge "to the traditional construct of Canada as a settler nation rooted in French and British colonial histories" and provided a backdrop and enabling condition to a history of museum change (Philips 2011).

One particularly important example of such a negotiation of power in the Canadian museum is the controversy over the Glenbow Museum's exhibition *The Spirit Sings*, a cultural event that accompanied the 1988 Winter Olympics (Conaty and Carter, 2005; Philips, 2011).[22] The Lubicon Cree boycotted the exhibition that celebrated First Nations culture, for the reason that the major corporate sponsor of the exhibition, Shell Canada Ltd., was drilling for oil on land that the Lubicon Cree claimed as part of their traditional territory, while the government procrastinated with treaty negotiations (Clifford, 1996; Phillips, 2011). This led to the founding of the Task Force, an official body that included museum professionals and First Nations from across Canada, intended to design guidelines for institutions that would be more inclusive of First Nations in the planning process; it made clear the absolute ethical necessity of partnership between First Nations and museums, as well as the unacceptable treatment of First Nations' cultures as passive specimens, subjects of study.

An account of partnerships between First Nations and museums on the development of two permanent exhibitions is provided by Canadian anthropologist and archeologist Gerald Conaty.[23] Conaty traces the partnership between the Blackfoot community and the

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[22] *The Spirit Sings: The Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* exhibition brought back to Canada hundreds of pieces of Aboriginal Art taken away in earlier centuries. While the exhibition itself was not more controversial than some earlier exhibitions dealing with the sensitive topic of cross-cultural representation (*Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and Modern*), these mostly generated debates in the press and academic journals. *The Spirit Sings* protest took activist forms. This resonated much stronger with the public and coincided with events occurring elsewhere, signaling "the new role which museum representation would soon assume as a site of postcolonial critique" (Phillips, 2011, pg. 11).

[23] Gerald Conaty was a senior curator at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary from 1990 until 2013 (when he passed away). He worked on shaping a genuine museum partnership with First Nations communities on

Glenbow Museum (Calgary, AB) on the development of the permanent exhibit *Nitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life*. The other is in the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History's development of a permanent gallery of First Nations' cultures. His analysis makes visible mutual benefits, but also highlights obstacles to and limitations of the partnership process due to time constraints and deadlines on the museum's part (the Saskatchewan project – Conaty, 1989). They also render visible resistances to and arguments against this type of participatory model, which poses a threat to expert discourse still perceived as neutral (Glenbow project – Conaty and Carter, 2005). Despite these difficulties they make clear the mutual benefits and importance of involving native communities at various levels in the (re)development program if full partnership is not achievable.[24]

According to Conaty, the partnership between the Blackfoot community and the Glenbow Museum, in which he participated, was the first full partnership established between a First Nations community and a Canadian museum. The four-year development process of the permanent exhibit *Nitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life* (exhibition development usually takes two years) involved building relationships between the museum staff and community through ceremonies, suppers, sharing stories and seeking new ways of working together through an experimental and unprescriptive process continually challenged and reshaped by the community's perspectives. This example is important because it marked a

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exhibition programing and development. His work serves as a model for museums of ethnographic collections nationally and internationally.

[24] Some museum professionals raised their concerns and critiqued the participatory model of the partnership between the Glenbow Museum and the Blackfoot, for it went beyond advising and thus posed a threat to the "ethical responsibility to present a balanced *truth*" (Conaty and Carter 2005).

turning point in the museum's work and knowledge about the culture whose artifacts they had in their collection. It foregrounded how Blackfoot history was interpreted and represented through the non-native understanding of historians and anthropologists (not always accurately), while also highlighting that traditional authority can and should have a place in contemporary Canadian museums. It also underscored the shifting role of museums that "should take the opportunity to move away from a safe, neutral position" and take part in raising awareness surrounding the complexity of the historical and contemporary relationships between First Nations and the larger society (Conaty and Carter 2005, p. 47).[25] One more recent Canadian example was the De T'a Hoti Ts'eeda exhibition (2006), co-curated by Gavin Renwick and Thomas Andrews. This exhibition demonstrated that a major role for the 21st century museum is to facilitate continuity of culture through working in parity with communities. The exhibition was a result of two decades of important collaborative "knowledge repatriation" projects between the Dene, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Fig. 12). [26] As such, the exhibition provided opportunities for "listening" to elders' stories about the objects informing us about both the 'past' and the 'present' of objects within a modern cultural context. The project provided Dene communities with direct contact with cultural heritage

[25] Acknowledged by the Glenbow team who participated in the project (Conaty and Carter 2005).

[26] Certain obstacles to the "physical repatriation" of artifacts from collections held in lawful ownership have prompted some Aboriginal groups to seek other methods of interacting with museum collections and to explore different forms of repatriation. The concept of "cultural revitalization" or "knowledge repatriation" is an effort "not to reclaim museum objects but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied" (Fienup-Riordan 2005 in Andrews 2011, p. 169). This concept demonstrates an indigenous understanding of heritage understood through the relationship of tangible and intangible knowledges, an artifact as the embodiment of knowledges and practices.

after 150 years of being parted from it, and with opportunities for learning and preserving information about their past through recreating specific items (http://gavinrenwick.org/de-ta-hoti-tseeda/, accessed: July 2014).[27]

Fig.12: Members of the community engaging with items from the Athapaskan collection

Both partnerships described by Conaty suggested a First Nations' priority and aim to establish "the museum as a cultural center where native people can teach their own people and others about their native culture" (Conaty 1989, p. 410). These two case studies highlight the fact that the communities in question were not interested in linear

[27] De T'a Hoti Ts'eeda (2006) was exhibited at; The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada; Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada; The Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. It coincided with the implementation of the Tlicho peoples land-claim and self-government. The project brought back to Canada the Athapaskan collection of the National Museums of Scotland consisting of 280 objects collected between 1858 and 1862 before outside influences were starting to cause great changes within Dene society (http://gavinrenwick.org/de-ta-hoti-tseeda/, accessed: July 2014).

representation and narrative, but instead insisted on displays that communicate the interconnectedness of all things in Creation.[28] As a result, the approach taken in developing exhibition narratives was thematic rather than chronological, and the focus was on emphasizing the continuity, depth, complexity and diversity of native cultures, as well as interconnectedness with nature and the spiritual world.[29]

While these examples present positive accounts of partnerships between First Nations and Canadian museums, many indigenous and non-indigenous museum scholars and curators argue that more work needs to be done (Lee-Ann Martin in Eldridge, 1996; Tom Hill in Eldridge, 1996; Doxtator, 1996; Conaty and Carter, 2005). Despite the Task Force's recommendations it has been difficult for museums to move from consulting to including First Nations in full partnerships. Obstacles pertain to the museums' preference and prioritizing of the scientific process (historical documents and scholarly discourse of information), and their resulting reluctance to give equal value to traditional knowledges (Lee-Ann Martin in Eldridge, 1996; Doxtator, 1996; Conaty and Carter, 2005). Consequently, this has produced tokenistic forms of inclusion such as the insertion of new policies, aboriginal officers and curators into an old unrevised system, thus reinscribing

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[28] Opposed to Western categories of nature and culture which create a radical simplification of ontology and further self-replicating binaries (mind/matter, subject/object), in First Nations perspective the world is inhabited by a range of beings, human and non-human, who all apprehend the world from distinct vantage points and communicate freely. "From this framework, animals, humans, features of landscape have points of view, exhibit agency, and engage in reciprocal responses" in a relational world of humans and non-humans (Cruikshank, 2012, p. 245). This ontological perspective, also characterized as a sentient ecology, is shared by many northern societies that consider animals, other entities and the environment to be sentient, regarding them as persons (Andrews 2011).

[29] According to Conaty this was spatially translated for the Glenbow exhibition design as a series of non-linear themes and layouts comprised of circles.

positions of power to non-native museums and giving aboriginal people a somewhat passive role (Doxtator, 1996).[30]

This implementation of inclusion, collaboration and education without revising the structure and principles of the museum models an "additive model" that leaves "the concept of plentitude at the heart of the museum project" intact (Rogoff, 2002, p. 66) – a belief system that organizes, classifies, locates and judges everything from the prevailing perspective of the West (Rogoff, 2002; Boast, 2011). Nevertheless, these shifts in Canadian museology have created an opening for modes of collaboration and representation fueled by different pedagogical motivations, ones that are able to produce a network of those who previously had not come together, and where meaning is not excavated but takes place in the world we currently inhabit (Rogoff, 2007).[31] They also made visible cultural practices and knowledges that exist beside each other, thus enabling renewed notions of the object as an embodiment of knowledges, technologies and experiences. This has profound benefits for museums and

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30 Thus the Task Force in many ways has not resolved but confirmed the ownership of and power over aboriginal objects by Canadian museums. Legal ownership assigned to museums and moral ownership granted to Indigenous peoples do not have the same weight, power and entitlements in the Western value system and consequently in Canadian museums. Moral ownership does not recognize access and control over an object and it does not grant cultural autonomy to present one's own history and culture to others without involving a third party. In that sense, collaborative exhibitions, from an indigenous perspective, are always like "being a guest in someone else's home. There are some things that won't be able to be done or said there" (Doxtator, 1996, p. 68).

31 Other initiatives creating shifts in Canadian museology come from smaller, less central institutions. Aboriginal museums, very different in structure and priorities from non-native museums, focus primarily on the educational, spiritual, social and cultural needs of the community. (Doxtator 1996; Clifford, 1997). The notion of a unified or linear history is replaced by local community histories about the cultural artifacts they present, accompanied with oral stories (Gwich'in Cultural Institute), thus responding to communities' needs. The individual artifacts are not subsumed under a larger historical narrative, as is often the case in mainstream museums including the RAM, that aspire to transcend local specificity in order to represent a national, international, or human heritage (Clifford 1997) and thus work in a homogenizing pedagogic mode.

culture in general because differing perspectives on the ontology of objects can bring depth and interest to object biographies and make relationships between tangible and intangible knowledges visible.

Museum and cultural difference

In order to make more visible the power relations, instrumentalization of representation and what is absent or silenced within the RAM's display narratives, I am drawn to the framework of "cultural difference" as opposed to "cultural diversity."[32] The positioning of the West/whiteness as a modern, rational agent still forms a base for assumptions regarding the right and privilege to enfold Native cultures into Western histories, and the claiming of the knowledge and artifacts of these cultures as objects of colonial knowledge. Only, in the twenty-first century, these claims to control are made in the name of the civilizing project of antiracism, multiculturalism and/or cultural diversity (Doxtator, 1996; Hernandez, 2008; Reardon and Tallbear, 2012).

The RAM states that the Indigenous gallery represents "an integrated and inclusive history of Alberta, incorporating multiplicity of perspectives and voices" and featuring communities speaking "with their own, distinct voices throughout" (RAM's pamphlet). It is true that the display incorporates Indigenous voices; panels (Fig. 13 and 14) cite them and so

[32] Although it claims otherwise, the concept of cultural diversity, a product of neoliberal capitalism encouraged in most democratic societies, belongs to the rhetoric of cultural stratification whose aim is to enforce conformity to an idealized version of the nation as homogenous. This implies locating, rationalizing, conditioning and classifying "difference" within "a system of multicultural coexistence determined by a dominant society." The concept of cultural diversity is therefore misleading because it is accompanied by the containment of true cultural diversity (Hernandez, 2008, p. 101).

does an introductory video installation at the entrance to the gallery. Nevertheless I would argue that these "voices" are harmoniously integrated in the display in a decorative manner, rather than performing difference and complexity of perspectives. Even though present, Indigenous voices are integrated into the dominant narrative of the display as pieces of evidence or decorum for the dominant cognitive framework provided by expert(s) (Fig. 13 and 14). One example of an explanatory panel titled '*Women's Work and Women's Art*' starts with a citation: "The best time in my life was in the bush. Every day there was something to do" Marie Gallant, Tsatu.' What follows is a very general description in past tense that complements women's aesthetic sensibility ("even every day objects were well made and designed with an eye to beauty") and with regard to formal properties of the objects ("belts were ornamented with richly dyed porcupine quills woven in intricate patterns") (Fig. 14). Conventional display cases are dressed up in signifiers of pastness and nature and citations of indigenous voices are followed by longer explanations in an expert mode (Fig. 14 and 15).

Another example is an introductory four-channel video that features a medley of Alberta's wilderness and starts with a group of archeologists finding something at an excavation site. A deep male Western voice narrates the visuals: "archeological evidence suggest.., 11000 years, 500 generations..." After this introduction Indigenous voices tell their stories of Creation and of inhabiting these parts. The narrators' voice complements them: " And this is what archeological records add to a story…", "another interpretation of rich history…" An aboriginal voice welcomes the visitor to the Syncrude Gallery. From there, spatial narration starts with images of archeological excavation sites and a diorama restaging a

dramatic buffalo hunt (Fig. 16 and 17). In this way a cognitive framework for display provided by experts is confirmed once more in the static display (RAM's display).

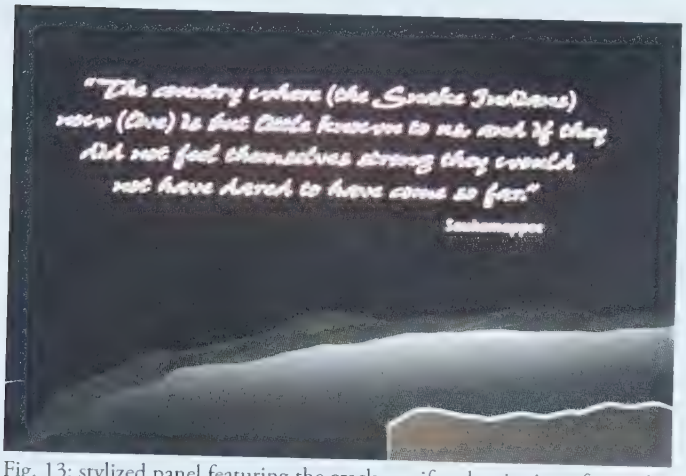

Fig. 13: stylized panel featuring the crack motif and a citation of an indigenous voice

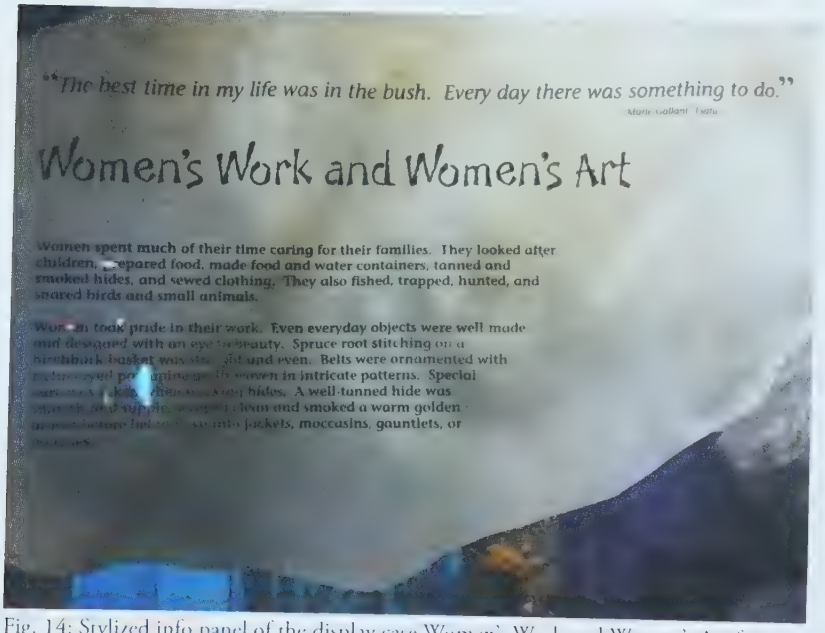

Fig. 14: Stylized info panel of the display case Women's Work and Women's Art featuring the crack motif and a citation of an indigenous voice, RAM's gallery of Aboriginal culture

Fig. 15: Display case Women's Work and Women's Art, RAM's gallery of Aboriginal culture

Fig. 16: Image of an archeological site at the entrance to the gallery

Fig. 17: A buffalo hunt diorama at the entrance to the gallery

On my reading this kind insertion of indigenous voices within the exhibition homogenizes communities, as difference is harmoniously and decoratively integrated rather than worked with to structurally affect the narrative of the exhibition. In this sense the concept of cultural diversity in the RAM retains the position of Euro-Canadian claims on the resources of indigenous people, signaling an unrevised "additive model" of the museum that assumes the possibility of change without loss, bringing otherness into its system, without losing a part of itself and unraveling its own territory (Rogoff, 2002).

The concept of cultural difference is important for this project because it facilitates an understanding of difference in relational terms, and opens up a space for the articulation and continued negotiation of contested cultural sites, practices and knowledge dispositions

that exist beside each other.[33] Here identities are seen as incomplete, partial and in flux, and culture is seen as a process.

Rejecting a position of cultural difference in favor of cultural diversity museums participated in consolidating the racial identity of the indigenous through display narratives and the classification of indigenous artifacts. The depiction of the indigenous as an evolutionary step of the Western, accompanied by unified linear historical narratives within museum displays, facilitated naturalizing settlers as "native" North Americans by providing them with the notion of a communal past (Phillips, 1998). Attaching childlike status to indigenous racial identity in the late nineteenth century facilitated the image of the progressive Euro-Canadian right to protect and govern. Accordingly, readings of indigenous North American material objects within the colonial museum discourse shifted their meaning over time. For example, objects first classified as pagan became celebrated as authentic and valuable, and what was read as progressive (denoting successful assimilation) became identified as degenerative (sign of weakness of a 'noble savage' without cultural value) (Phillips, 1998). These narratives about objects within ethnographic museum collections, predominantly constructed within the colonial museum discourse of the nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, corresponded with changing socio-political urges and agendas of the period. Control over the identity of the *other* was often utilized to solidify the parameters of

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33 The concept of cultural difference is an important decolonizing concept towards reimagining colonialism, colonial discourse and knowledge, as it "does not attempt to totalize cultures in order to rationalize their interaction within particular geo-political frame" (Hernandez, 2008, p. 102). It gives presence to minority positions that remain subjugated by official conceptualizations of the nation, revealing that difference is an inherent part of the heterogeneous culture.

whiteness, its association with value and progress that needs to be defended, hence justifying hegemony over native lands and resources (Lopez, 1994; Doxtator, 1996; Phillips, 1998; Reardon and Tallbear, 2012).[34] This consequently inspired, permitted and foreclosed certain representational possibilities for indigenous heritage and cultural objects still evident today in museums having difficulties in making connections with living culture in their exhibitions (Doxtator, 1996; Phillips, 1998).

Fig. 18: Empty Community News and Upcoming Events panels in the section that represents contemporary Indigenous communities

[34] Critical race theorist Ian F. Haney Lopez uses the term "racial fabrication" to argue that race and racial identities are not genetically predetermined but rather produced through the ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic processes in which, not abstract but concrete social, political and economic forces are implicated. Important for this essay is the insight that not only identities of people of color are mediated by race, but that "white" identity too is a social fabrication, one that is to an even greater extent implicated in preserving racial constructs. "The attempt to racially define the conquered, subjugated or enslaved is at the same time an attempt to racially define the conquerer, the subjugator, or the enslaver" (Lopez, 1994, p. 971).

The RAM's spatial arrangement and design elements within the display communicate this problem in several ways. Linear historical narrative has a declining trajectory from the ancient past to modern times, where the display ends with a completely empty display case titled "community news" (Fig. 18). Even though it seems that the intentions for this part of the display were good – the RAM wanted to include the evidence of an active, living community –the displays, nonetheless, remain empty. Also, interesting is the choice of a comic-book style typeface for the legends and written explanations (Fig. 19), which in combination with a stylized cracked wall motif (Fig. 20) featured in the display design creates a bizarre cartoon-like background theme throughout the display.[35]

[35] In his book *Understanding Comics: Invisible Art* comic book artist Scott McCloud analyzes certain methods and styles utilized by comics. He examines cartooning as a form of amplification through simplification to explain the enthrallment of our culture with the simplified reality of cartoons (McCloud, 1993). In my analysis of the exhibition design I detect a similar forms of simplification and stylizing that create an environment based on the elements of entertainment and as such neutralize critical reflection. For example, in cartooning simplified and realistic elements are used together to create a dynamic of identification and objectification within the narrative (realistic treatment is used to objectify and emphasize otherness). Also backgrounds in cartooning serve as tool for conveying certain "invisible ideas," ones that communicate to our subconsciousness certain atmosphere, emotions. As such background will affect our reading of the character/entity of a given scene even if the character/entity itself is not stylized (McCloud, 1998).

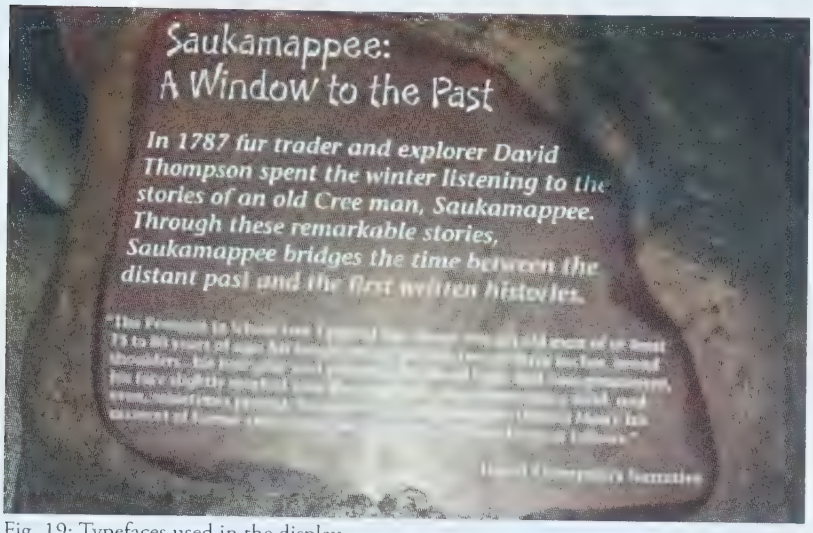

Fig. 19: Typefaces used in the display

Fig. 20: View of the gallery

Interestingly, the simplification of imagery in a cartoon-like mode in any medium has its purpose; it focuses our attention on specific details and becomes an effective tool for

storytelling (McCloud, 1994). This is because the simplified elements of cartoon imagery can make us more susceptible to the story told while eliminating our critical distance (Fig. 21, 22 and 23). In such a state we are unaware of the storytellers presence, his/her vested nature, and we allow the narrative, omnipresent voice/concept to be internalized more easily (McCloud, 1994).

Fig. 21: View of the gallery

Fig. 22: View of the gallery

Fig. 23: A wall featuring contemporary indigenous voices in the gallery

Fig. 24: View of the RAM's second floor from the Indigenous gallery

Therefore I find it quite peculiar that a museum—besides sharing the capacity of comics to translate time into space by organizing chronological events spatially—utilizes cartooning as a way to convey a story about First Nations cultures. I have not come across similar treatment in the natural history gallery or any other space of the RAM, which makes cartoon-like features specific to and contained in the RAM's aboriginal gallery (Fig. 19). By cartooning the gallery environment, the spatial narrative about the cultures becomes more like entertainment, which signals that critical distance is unnecessary and irrelevant. In turn this makes the lessons, concepts, and narratives offered seem more neutral, unquestionable, and therefore easily 'digestible.'

In this chapter, by tracing the historical and ideological lineage of natural history museums, as well as their contemporary challenges, my aim is to denaturalize modes of cross-cultural representation embraced by these institutions in order to open up space for excluded

representational possibilities. The concept of cultural difference and the idea of identities as always partial and in flux is important in order to discern not just how human identities are socially constructed, but also the identities, values and authenticity of objects. By examining the spatial narrative of the RAM and the indigenous gallery I am interested in understanding the connection between certain design cues and specific historical, political, and economic drives that fuel the emergence of natural history museums. This has revealed that design cues/styles/methods and representational modes utilized by the RAM are still shaped by colonial narratives. What follows in chapter two is unpacking in more detail the notion of tangible and intangible knowledges, which in my reading yields an opening for new ethical and aesthetic demands on modes of cross-cultural representation, while challenging expert position and Western epistemology as dominant.

Chapter II

In this chapter I want to unpack the relationship of intangible and tangible knowledge more generally and especially in regards to the tangible museum displays in ethnographic collections. Attentiveness to the intangible – in this case the conceptual and spiritual frameworks of the First Nations cultures – expressed through tangible artifacts can help move the museum beyond the notion of inert objects waiting for an inscription of meaning. This could shift our focus toward the embodied knowledges objects carry, their ongoing liveliness and processual nature, thus, inspiring new ethical demands and aesthetic modes for representing heritage in ethnographic collections – ones that are more responsive, caring and "committed to flourishing pastpresents" (Haraway, 2007, p. 8).[36]

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[36] While learning to live in flourishing presents is indebted to indigenous practices and ideas, "pastpresents" is a term that Donna Haraway borrows from feminist theorist Katie King. It serves as another way to face history and to overcome the frontier myth about dichotomy between traditional and the modern. "Pastpresent" is contemporary time, a present that is not the only point of transition between past and future (Haraway, 2007).

Recent redefinitions of the term 'cultural heritage'

Let me start unpacking the notion of intangible and tangible knowledges by outlining the definition of and guidelines for the viability of intangible heritage provided by UNESCO, because they facilitate a shift in notions about cultural heritage, value, authenticity and the authority that defines them. In the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage UNESCO considers intangible cultural heritage in dynamic relational terms, constantly recreated, organically updated and (re)articulated through/by community and context.[37] Characterizing it as "traditional, contemporary and living at the same time" (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014), this notion of the heritage is indebted to indigenous cultures that value aesthetics as process rather than as product (Roberts, 1994; Andrews, 2014). In contrast, Western notions of authenticity and value generally regard physical values and fidelity of cultural heritage (material, workmanship, design and setting). This reductionist approach to examining the complex fabric of cultural heritage often leads to the decay of the physical and social context in which objects are found (Munjeri, 2004). Before UNESCO finally approved it in 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage went through a long process of grappling with these old definitions of authenticity and value criteria for the cultural heritage (Munjeri, 2004).

Finally, UNESCO recognized the importance of the intangible cultural heritage that

37 "Safeguarding" means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of intangible cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014).

lies in the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted from one generation to another, "providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future" (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014).[38] However it is important to note that the way aboriginal people relate to heritage does not define tangible and intangible, or nature and culture as two separate phenomena – instead they stress an intertwined relationship, where the role of everyday practice, enskilment and memory are of special interest. Intangible aspects, such as the narratives, embodied knowledges and values are what makes cultural heritage real to people (Andrews, 2011, 2014).

These redefinitions of heritage are useful because they open up a space for different worldviews and value systems to become visible. The emphasis on the transfer of knowledges, skills and values shifts the focus from the cultural form embedded in the past to processual nature, relationality, and vitality of heritage. A tangible object can be seen as a catalyst for generating transfer of knowledges and remaking of the culture, thus providing new pedagogical opportunities. As the emphasis in these definitions of cultural heritage shift towards process so too does the value system, criteria and the authority capable of defining what is important and valuable. UNESCO's guidelines are important because they facilitate a

[38] UNESCO recommends that intangible cultural heritage is "a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development" that participates in fostering intercultural dialogue in the face of increased globalization. This is also underscored in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore of 1989, in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, and in the Istanbul Declaration of 2002 adopted by the Third Round Table of Ministers of Culture. The interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage is also highlighted in the Convention (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014).

renewed sense of heritage and expertise that challenges a value system based only on an object's formal properties and expert knowledge.[39] They give authority to the communities' traditional knowledge in defining the significance of their cultural heritage and in turn the expert's role shifts from authority to facilitator.

It is stated in the guidelines of the Convention that "intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage" (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014).

Even though the guidelines do not make clear to what extent communities have power in deciding how their heritage is represented and interpreted, these redefinitions could further facilitate the shift from the systems of hierarchy that prioritize rationalist objectivity embodied in the expert subject towards a horizontal distribution of authority that recognizes different modes of knowledge and learning. Attentiveness to the holistic nature of an object could open representational possibilities that foreground ongoing contingencies of objects. Instead of reconstructing an object's "original" use or context understood in essentialist terms, we might become more curious about how to acknowledge and release the object's embodied knowledges. This renewed pedagogical focus could shift the definition of the museum's audience, learning modes, priorities and content, consequently affecting how and

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39 "Intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities" (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006, accessed: May 2014).

what is represented in ethnographic collections. Key to this shift is the issue of the expert paradigm and its epistemic dominance rooted in Western claims of objectivity that on account of established epistemic forms (research norms, analysis, and methods) is discrediting other ways of knowing and knowledge production. This is particularly important for issues of cross-cultural representation in museums where indigenous ways of knowing get reduced to decoration for dominant narratives provided by experts.[40]

Redefinition of objectivity

The most problematic issue with the objectivity of the Western cultural narrative is that it is unlocatable (therefore unaccountable) and that it defines what can count as knowledge and thus acts reductively on subjectivities, agencies and embodied accounts of truth (Haraway, 1988). In this section, in order to address the issues pertaining to the expert discourse that defines what counts as a legitimate knowledge in the context of exhibitions such as one I analyze in this thesis, I will trace the lineage of the reductionist perspectives on the complex fabric of cultural heritage with an aim to denaturalize certain representational modes that promote this approach. This will help me develop a more robust understanding of cultural heritage, which is important when designing museum displays that are culturally sensitive and which aim to expand indigenous governance.

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[40] From the perspective of environmental ecology a similar problem is detected when scientists collaborate and consult with indigenous local population. One tendency is to transform oral tradition into data and insert it into Western frameworks, which results in the shedding of important concepts inherent in the stories. The problem with this is that oral traditions convey meaning much broader than data; the story preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time, offering alternative ways to think about the world and relationships among entities (Rose, 2004; Cruikshank, 2012).

Since the late nineteenth century, the prevailing story about culture was a scientific one that privileged dispassionate inquiry (Doxtator, 1998) and promoted the epistemological hierarchy through which a perceived neutral, expert discourse was/is the highest authority (Clifford, 1998). Value and authenticity assigned to the 'objective object' was established through the object's relation to the expert judgment, competence and ownership, distinguishing it from mundane, "real" objects and thus pacifying, immobilizing and alienating the object from grounds of action (Pollock, 1998). As discussed in the first chapter, ethnographic authority was not immediately recognized but which gained credibility over time and became institutionalized as a dominant method of producing legitimate knowledge within a colonial paradigm. This foregrounds the issue of epistemic norms based on particular approaches, analysis and methods that are not inherently neutral but that are shaped and institutionalized historically.

I now turn back to the RAM in order to unpack this issue further. At the RAM the display of First Nations culture is conceptualized as six content sections radiating from the entrance area to the gallery. The RAM describes this spatial concept as multifunctional for navigating the gallery: visitors can follow the chronological narrative that takes you in a circle back to the entrance area, or one can choose to use strategically positioned openings to cut across sections and explore the display thematically. Regardless of this concept which is intended to encourage cross-referencing, the navigational design elements such as lighting and path-finding suggest a dominance of the chronological trajectory presented in synthetic, linear terms. The themes offered for cross-referencing are closely tied to the chronological

narrative and mostly correspond to the settler priorities and sensibilities of industry/economy oriented categories: 'Living with the Land', 'Fur Trade and Early Contact', 'Dividing the Land', 'Immigration, Settlement, Agriculture/Ranching', 'Resource Era' and 'Negotiating Identities and Aboriginal Resurgences'. These spatial narratives, whether thematic or chronological, tie artifacts to their structure that promotes a specific interpretation and lesson.

In this way, the metonymic partiality of the ethnographic fragment is compensated through display techniques by staging and fabricating what is absent through interpretation based on the Western sensibility of claimed knowledge and notions of fixed authenticity/identity (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).[41] This mode corresponds to operational aesthetics which assumes a better understanding of the culture than the members of that culture themselves.[42] From a contemporary art perspective, visual art theorist Grant Kester identifies this mode of operating as orthopedic aesthetics; characterizing it as a tendency toward antidiscusivity that promotes expert superiority and works under the assumption that viewers' perceptual and cognitive apparatuses require correction/guidance (Kester, 2004).[43]

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41 The ethnographic artifact is a product of the process and mechanisms that define, segment, and detach ethnographic fragment from its original context of production and use. This act of detachment of ethnographic object poses the question "where does the object begin and where does it end?" (Kirshenblatt-Gimbeltt, 1998, p. 388), opening it up for interpretation and joining with other artifacts in order to tell a certain story. Thus the "ethnographic object is the creation of the ethnographer, so, too, are the putative cultural wholes of which they are part" (Kirshenblatt-Gimbeltt, 1998, p. 389).

42 Kirshenblatt-Gimbeltt uses the term identified as such by Neil Harris to demonstrate how an ethnographer creates value through his/her expertise, presenting it as more relevant and faithful than what can be offered by the originating community (Kirshenblatt-Gimbeltt, 1998).

43 Grant Kester in his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, discusses art practices that explore and create new forms of understanding and production of meaning through creative

On my reading, this operating mode is evident in the First Nations gallery in the abundance of explanatory labels, diagrams and photo documents that textualize objects and sometimes juxtapose them with images of archeological sites while providing a cognitive frame and acting as surrogates for the words of an absent interpreter.[44] This can be traced to the Western rationalist notion of objectivity and an idea of progress that gives priority to expert knowledge that is perceived as neutral, verifiable and therefore superior. This perspective sets "experts" up to interpret, preserve and govern indigenous cultures in the name of 'benefit for all,' keep resulting in the shedding of non-Western impetuses, significances and knowledges (Doxtator, 1998; Rogoff, 2002). In this way knowledge gets constructed in terms of established forms of expertise that discredit other forms of acquiring knowledge which do not follow dominant guidelines.[45] Thus in order for the modes of inclusion and collaboration promoted in contemporary museums to work, forms of

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dialogue with and within communities. As such, these practices question the key principles of avant-garde art and art theory. In particularly they challenge the expert model, and the traditional roles of artists and audiences and demonstrate a "need to think critically about the complex negotiations involved in working across boundries of difference and power" (Kester, 2004, p. 171). In relation to this Kester identifies orthopedic aesthetics utilized in some collaborative art projects that still rely upon the expert/artist authority model established in avant-gard art. These practices end up treating communities in essentialist terms and thus prescriptively.

44 "The priority of objects over texts in museum settings was reversed during the second half of the nineteenth century..." when the most important part of the exhibition became a label, and replaced the absent lecturer-ethnographer. This was based upon the notion that objects could not be relied upon to speak for themselves, hence the importance of an organizational scheme for arranging objects and the labels to explain them (Kirshenblatt-Gimbeltt, 1998).

45 I draw from the article *Be(e)coming experts: The controversy over insecticides in the honey bee colony collapse disorder* by Kleinman and Suryanarayanan, which explores the nature of politics of expertise through controversy over insecticides in the honey bee colony collapse disorder (Kleinman and Suryanarayanan, 2012).

producing and representing knowledge (methods, framing the questions, analysis) defined by dominant epistemology need to be unraveled.

In this thesis I turn to thinkers that have worked toward developing "usable doctrines of objectivity" and critical tools organized around embodied and situated knowledges, elaborate specificity, partial perspectives, uncertainty, and difference for constructing worlds less organized by axes of domination and rational knowledge claims (Haraway, 1988). Bruno Latour argues that a key issue pertains to rationalist claims of objectivity on matters of fact/objects as an ultimate descriptive tool to represent reality based on splitting the subject/object and therefore baring the entity/thing from its complex and entangled ontology (Latour, 2004).[46] On the other hand postmodern relativism has disassembled, deconstructed and worked towards discrediting objectivity, foreclosing on the possibility for faithful accounts of a real world (Haraway, 1988; Latour, 2004).[47] The notion of objectivity caught up between the Western concept of disembodied scientific objectivity and postmodern relativism, made clear that it is neither enough to show radical historical contingency nor

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46 In his essay *Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern* Latour uses the term 'matter of fact' as another word for an object denoting a descriptive tool since the Enlightenment for which he argues has become useless in producing faithful accounts of reality with an import of care. Latour identifies the source of the problem in the binary system in which the object occupies two opposing positions – fetish status and passive/blank screen status. The same object depending on an argument will be placed in one of these categories, but interestingly the two positions are never juxtaposed to reveal their application in contradictory repertoires (Latour, 2004).

47 Donna Haraway calls totalizing objectivity rooted in the Enlightenment (systematic narrowing and obscuring in promise of transcendence) and relativism both "god tricks" (and mirror twins) that claim to be everywhere and nowhere and "both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective" as well elaborate specificity and difference (Haraway, 1988, p.584).

modes of construction for everything (Haraway, 1988; Latour, 2004).[48]

As opposed to Western appropriations of the world reduced to passive or inert resources, a renewed sense of objectivity requires the object of knowledge to be an active agent or actor. These accounts of the 'real'/objective should not depend on the logic of "discovery" but rather on the heterogeneous relational acts of "conversation" (Haraway, 1988) – gathering and assembling things with an import of care and generating more ideas than received (Latour, 2004).[49] Donna Haraway, in her essay *Situated Knowledges,* argues that only critical positioning—not identity/self identity—situated and embedded can produce embodied, faithful accounts of objectivity because "the knowing itself is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another" (Haraway, 1988, p. 586).[50]

I am drawn to this renewed sense of objectivity because it facilitates thinking about

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[48] A realist account and a method of devising descriptive tools that "transform the critical urge in the ethos of someone who adds reality to matters of fact and not subtract reality" is needed (Latour, 2004, p. 232). "The question was never to get away from facts but closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism" (Latour, 2004, p. 231).

[49] The visual theorist Irit Rogoff also calls this a move from critique to criticality. Criticality works from within, in a mode that is open-ended, embedded and situated. As opposed to criticism, which is a didactic and diagnostic act of judgment addressed to a clear-cut object of criticism. Criticality recognizes our own imbrication in the object or the cultural moment and our own performative nature of any action or stance we might be taking in relation to it and therefore recognizes that object of knowledge is relational and not fixed (Rogoff 2003).

[50] A similar understanding useful for this discussion comes from psychoanalysis. According to Shoshana Felman, psychoanalysis suggests knowledge as a structural dynamic that comes through the mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speeches (analyzed/analyst) and it is not contained by an individual (analyst/authority). The true object of teaching in psychoanalysis "can only be a mode of learning which institutes psychoanalysis as a subject" (Felman, 1982).

how we represent and work with things and also challenges the expert mode and knowledge claims that acted reductively on the complex fabric of heritage, while discrediting other ways of knowing. Further, these interventions that work through situated embodied accounts of truth make it possible to care about the things we study and work toward redefining the relationship between expert and 'non-expert' knowledges. As such they are particularly important for understanding how and why traditional authority and experiential knowledge can and should have a place in contemporary museums. With these insights in mind let me now return to unpacking the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges in following section.

Liveliness of Things

I would like to further explore the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges facilitated by a renewed sense of objectivity based on relational acts of knowing in alliance with the thinkers previously mentioned; thinkers who challenge a reductionist approach to the world while working towards developing tools and a vocabulary to address objects in their ontological complexity and liveliness. I will start by giving an example from the RAM so I can further examine this idea.

The Manitou Stone (also known as the Stone God or Iron Creek meteorite) is one very obvious example in the First Nations gallery where the complexity and liveliness of a thing is reduced to an inert object (Fig. 18). Even though the label acknowledges the sacredness of the Stone to First Nations, the Stone is still displayed conventionally with

Western sensibility in the historical context of the annihilation of the buffaloes by settlers without regard to its ongoing spiritual importance to First Nations nor recommendations of the communities (Fig. 25 and 26).[51]

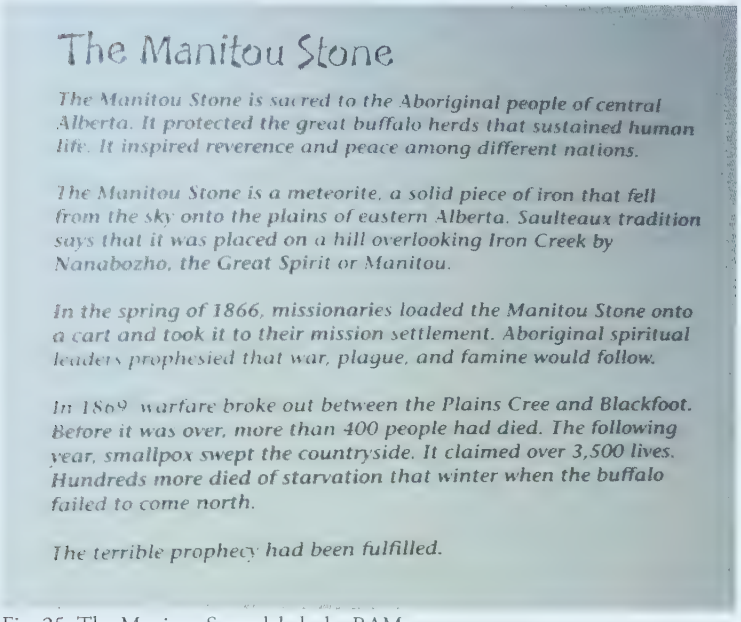

Fig. 25: The Manitou Stone label, the RAM

[51] The Manitou Stone, the Stone God or Iron Creek meteorite—in a scientific classification—fell near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. In 1866 it was taken from its location by the Methodist missionaries and placed in Victoria Methodist College, Ontario. On the request of the Alberta Government it was given to the Provincial Museum of Alberta on a long-term loan in 1972. In 1999 another request for the Stone was made by Blue Quills College (St Paul, Alberta). After the RAM claimed that there were more parties interested in the Stone, Victoria University transferred title of the Stone to the RAM in 2001 with an understanding that the Museum would consult with First Nations to seek advice for its appropriate care and location. Consultations undertaken between 2002 and 2004 with thirty-three Albertan and Saskatchewan First Nations indicate that a majority of First Nations (twenty-one out of thirty-three) recommended that the Stone be returned to the Iron Creek area, while few (three out of thirty-three) thought that the Stone should remain in the RAM but displayed in a separate area that allows privacy for prayer and performing ceremonies (Parry, 2004).

Fig. 26: The Manitou Stone display, the RAM

Nevertheless, evidence of its ongoing activity is made visible as the Stone discretely but continually accumulates tobacco offerings at its base (Fig. 27), indicating "a progressive addition that marks time and reifies process" (Roberts, 1994, p. 40). Here, tobacco offerings could be seen as a part of the Stone's aesthetic whole, as a form of sustaining and nourishing its liveliness and ongoing relevance.[52] This activity of tobacco offerings is not in any way

[52] Mary Nooter Roberts reframes authenticity in terms of activation and deactivation of objects, especially sacred objects in museum collections. She offers a lens that poses the question: can an object be considered authentic if it is deactivated/desacralized and if it is detached from practices of care and interactions that constitute the life of a thing (Roberts, 1994)? Similarly, the Canadian environmental archeologist Thomas Andrews thinks about authenticity in relation to aboriginal cultural landscapes suggesting that authenticity is a property that emerges through specific interactions between people and things, not a property intrinsic to material fabric (Andrews, 2014). This way focus is shifted from objects to relationships and practices that are sustaining these realtionships.

encouraged by the museum, the caption does not suggest it nor does the design of the display; rather, these offerings are acts acknowledging the Stone's ongoing spiritual importance by the communities and initiated by them. In a way, this could be also read as a reaction towards the museum still not responding to recommendations of the communities to place the Stone in a separate area that allows privacy for prayer and performing ceremonies.

Fig. 27: The tobacco offerings at the base of the Manitou Stone display

However, the RAM's display, which renders invisible the complex histories and relevance of the Stone, resembles Bruno Latour's insight regarding an object or a matter of fact as a gathering that has failed: "a fact that has not been assembled according to due process" (Latour, 2004, p. 246) and never simultaneously made through a complex history or

new, real, and interesting participants in the universe (Latour, 2004).[53] Pushed against the background of its museum stage, stylistically reminiscent of old cowboy movies, the Stone seems more like a stage prop that facilitates the story crafted about the fragment of the past that it was once part of. A buffalo skull sits on the ground below it, a cracked wall motif frames it, and an old photograph showing two cowboys posing in front of a huge mound of buffalo skulls hangs on the wall next to it, all confirming that the prophecy of the Stone's removal was fulfilled. This kind of designed assemblage of decoratively stylized past-nature conceals what constitutes the life of the Stone.[54] It depicts it romantically in the form of light infotainment, while its ongoing record is cut off and a cutting is now placed in the museum along with a collection of other cuttings (Ingold, 2010).[55]

Therefore, by objectifying the Stone, by focusing on the inert 'objectness' of a thing that can be analyzed and unproblematically restaged, the display speaks to Western attitudes while simultaneously rendering invisible the ongoing liveliness/thingness of the Stone and denying the gathering of other participants in production of meaning. Thus, the object

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53 Thing, entity and gathering are words for matters of concern, while object is another word for matter of fact. Bruno Latour's essay, *'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern;'* offers these distinctions for the purpose of renewing critique and its descriptive tools which he argues have become self-reproducing and therefore useless in producing faithful accounts of reality with an import of care (Latour, 2004).

54 In her essays *Thing Power* and *The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter,* Jane Bennett suggests how certain assemblages conceal and others render visible the vitality of things. She gives an example of systems and design cues that promote perpetual and increased consumption and as such negate "thing power" and and are anti-materialistic in their essence (Bennett, 2004, 2010).

55 To visualize the process of making, following, becoming and joining the forces Ingold uses palpable metaphors like textility, weaving, threads and re-cords. According to Ingold "re-cord" of a thing represents thing's liveliness, its temporal trajectories from past to present and into the future (Ingold, 2010).

(matter of fact) as a very partial, political rendering of thing (matter of concern) can in no way claim to represent reality. It makes serious consideration of objectivity (thinginess) and merging of matters of fact into highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse matters of concern impossible (Latour, 2004). In the words of Tim Ingold, by rendering "lifeworld" to objects, we ignore the very flow that brought them to life.[56]

The notion of a *thing* denoting *gathering* serves to propose what would happen if we talked about an object as if it had the rich and complicated qualities of the thing. It is also useful for thinking about the relationship between intangible and tangible aspects together since the notion of a *thing* shifts focus from objects to relationships. This resonates with aboriginal ontologies that highlight interconnected, entangled categories of nature and culture, of humans and non-humans.[57] As such they provide intellectual scaffolding for achieving well-being in an ecologically interconnected way, through reciprocity between

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[56] Tim Ingold argues that essential relation in a life-world is not between matter and form but between materials and forces (a concept from Deleuze and Guattari that he expands on). Ingold's performative experiments are particularly useful for this project whereby he makes the flow of heterogeneous materials and forces (human and non-human) visible, highlighting the relational dynamics of the processes and continuity. He develops an ontology that assigns primacy to the processes of formation (vs. final product) and to the flows and transformations of materials and forces (vs. state of matter) challenging the idea of superiority of mind over matter/form (hylomorphic model). He suggests, practitioners are guided through their varied and heterogeneous materials, they participate in the flow of the materials and forces, what he calls the textility of making (Ingold, 2010).

[57] In alliance with Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and indebted to indigenous knowledges, Julie Cruikshank invites us to consider alternatives to 'modernist conceit that humans always and everywhere understand the distinction between nature and culture as straightforward binary categories' in which humans evolved from animals leaving them behind. Opposed to Western categories of nature and culture that created radical simplification of ontology and further self-replicating binaries (mind/matter, subject/object), in many indigenous perspectives the world is inhabited by range of beings, human and non-human who all apprehend the world from distinct vantage points and communicate freely. "From this framework, animals, humans, features of landscape have points of view, exhibit agency, and engage in reciprocal responses" in a relational world of humans and non-humans (Cruikshank 2012).

human and non-human persons, while sensitizing perception for the vital power of matter and non-human entities (Cruikshank, 2012). From this perspective, tobacco offerings and other practices that are acknowledging, caring for and releasing the Stone's embodied values are a part of and participate in threading the holistic aesthetic fabric of the Stone. These relationships are a gathering of thingness; they participate in the processes of things becoming in the world.

So to look at the thing is to look with it as it unfolds in the world, rather than behind it to an originating intention of which it is a final product. By this logic, the agency of an object and human as ontological center is undone by bringing things back to animate life (Ingold, 2013).[58] This is a particularly important political and ethical contribution today when there is a tendency to "refer all expressions of thing-power back to a human operation conceived as its ultimate source" (Bennett, 2004, p. 356). Therefore "the ethical task at hand is to cultivate the ability to discern nonhuman vitality, to become perceptually open to it" in order to recognize the shared material basis, the kinship and mutual entanglement of all things regardless of their status (Bennett, 2010, p. 49). According to Bennett, this could be recognized as an important decolonizing gesture with an ethical aim to distribute value more generously to those who were (often) excluded because they did not conform to standards of Kantian morality promoted in a Euro-American, bourgeois, theocentric model of the

[58] Ingold challenges human as ontological center by demonstrating that as opposed to the notion of superiority of mind over form/matter, we participate in the flow of materials and forces, human and non-human in world's becoming. (Ingold 2013)

world.[59] Recognizing the vitality of things challenges the notion of human as ontological center and self-replicating binaries (mind/matter, subject/object, nature/culture) all with the intention to induce more careful and strategic ecological attentiveness (Bennett, 2010).[60]

Politically and ethically important perspectives are offered here, differing both culturally and epistemologically. These perspectives challenge Western rational thought that renders matter passive, inert, and homogenous and promotes the anthropocentric understanding of being in the world. They highlight interconnectedness and shift our understanding and implications of human doing within the world that is never outside of a sticky web of connections/ecology. The ethico-political contribution of these perspectives comes from the insight that liveliness is distributed and expressed through different modes/material bodies that are always in the process of entering into a set of relationships with other modes, so to be a mode is to "mode-ify" and be "mode-fied" (Bennett, 2004).

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[59] An argument that a strong distinction between subject and object is needed to prevent the instrumentalization and objectification of humans, is acknowledged by vital materialism but at the same time challenged by the fact that "Kantian imperative to treat humanity always as an end in itself and never merely as means does not have a stellar record of preventing human suffering or promoting human wellbeing" (Bennett, 2010, p. 47). The most acute phenomenon of reducing subjects to mere objects, where an object is viewed as 'the dead other to life,' Bennett locates in 'American materialism' as anti-materialism in its essence, a materialistic way of life that encourages increased consumptions of products and junking in order to make space for further consumption and therefore devalues and conceals the thing power through promotion of certain attitudes facilitated by design methods (overcrowded displays of department stores) (Bennet, 2004, 2010).

[60] In her essay 'Thing Power' Jane Bennett distinguishes vital materialism in relation to historical materialism (of Marx) and body materialism (Foucault, Butler) in terms of the set of powers they emphasize and political work they do. Historical materialism focuses on concrete structured quality of social materialities in order to expose "hidden injuries of the class, economic inequities and other unjust effects of capital flows and sedimentation," (p. 366) body materialists locate body inside culture and bio-culture to examine political forces through which body is appropriated in order to expose how "cultural practices shape what is experienced as natural or real" (p. 348) While they both refuse to detach materiality from humanity. Vital materialism extends its political work to include non-human entities in order to give philosophical expression to the vitality, willfulness and recalcitrance of non-human entities and to consider the ethico-political import of this intervention (Bennett, 2004).

This process is never in full control of any-body because it always enters the modification process with other modes. In this way the world is not a place of subjects and objects but of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations that shift over time, emphasizing closeness, and the intimacy of humans and non-humans (Bennett, 2004).

These insights and interventions are important for this project because they oppose and radically challenge assumptions that render objects/matter passive. Even more importantly they are committed to making visible the co-existence of different materialities (human and non-human) and their mutual entanglement. As such, they take the pulse from difference, partiality, and incompleteness and gather what is neglected or rendered absent within the dominant discourse. From this perspective an object, a thing becomes a catalyst for gathering, for open-ended heterogeneous acts of meaning making and unexpected connections, which constitute the life and embodied knowledges of a thing itself. These insights challenge the Western idea of essentialist and fixed authenticity as physical state or material essence and problematize the re-creation of the original, the authentic and the pure in museum display practices. Crucially, they enable us to study things with an import of care, as well as demand different modes for representing things that I will address in the section that follows.

New ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation/accountability

In this section, I would like to consider the ethical-political import of accounts discussed in previous sections and consider their implication for the aesthetics of how we

represent things, what we display and how we display it. I would like to focus on 'care' as a mode of self-interest in a world where faithful accounts of truth depend on relational acts of conversations/being. My aim is to understand how a mode of care can affect the way we represent things and to yield an opening toward more ethical, relevant and accountable representational possibilities. Ones that engage with the pressing question of how to inherit and face "the living-and-killing-past" so we can learn how to live in a "flourishing present" (Haraway, 2007).[61]

In this context let me turn again to the RAM's display, where, after staging First Nations culture in a "natural" exterior world, the museum's spatial narrative visibly enters a different period, a "modern" settler world announced by a symbolic church entrance and stylized architectural elements (Fig. 28, 29 and 30). This section, titled 'Immigration, Settlement, Agriculture/Ranching,' represents the consequences of Euro-Canadian culture for the indigenous way of life: banning spirituality, forced farming, and residential schools. The display reflects critically on the residential schools, which is evident in captions. The residential school experience is expressed through objects, documents and photographs in a

[61] The idea of learning to live in a flourishing present is indebted to Aboriginal practices and ideas, but not in the mode of colonial or postcolonial discourse romanticizing the indigenous. Rather, as a shift away from the frontier myth about the unbridgeable dichotomy between the traditional and the modern that forecloses another way to face knotted histories. According to Deborah Bird Rose, in contrast to European societies that "face" the future, while the past is behind and the present a vanishing point of transition, Aboriginal people "face" the past for which they bear the responsibility of ongoing care in a thick and consequential present, a multidimensional matrix of relationships. Thus, Aboriginal material and ethical guidance on taking care of country insists that we learn to care for ancestors as well as offspring (Haraway, 2007).

display window and a diorama of the classroom interior (Fig. 31, 32, 33 and 34).[62] The residential school diorama offers a glimpse of the appropriating and 'brain washing' methods exercised by these institutions over indigenous kids communicated in the caption of the display; "the first object (of Indian education) is to make them better men, and if possible, good Christian men" (Fig. 32). Through these frames the devastating consequences of Euro-Canadian politics on the First Nations are acknowledged and integrated into the chronological narrative of the exhibition, but on my reading, without attentiveness to and care for the "thick pastpresent" (Haraway, 2007). The display environment that romanticized naturalness of First Nations culture transitions to an area of the display that depicts indigenous peoples endangered by Euro-Canadian progressive culture (Fig. 29 and 30). This visually communicated contrast somewhat resonates with the settlers preference for the categories of wild, "endangered", rare, or authentic. Conceived and represented like this, the display risks restoring and placing past-nature in time outside time, outside the care and reach of responsible generation.

62 A strict looking teacher points to a world atlas on the blackboard in front of two students, one bringing wood for the stove, the other seated with her back turned toward a window that serves as an access to the scene for the viewer.

Fig. 28: Transition into the modern world, the Aboriginal gallery, RAM

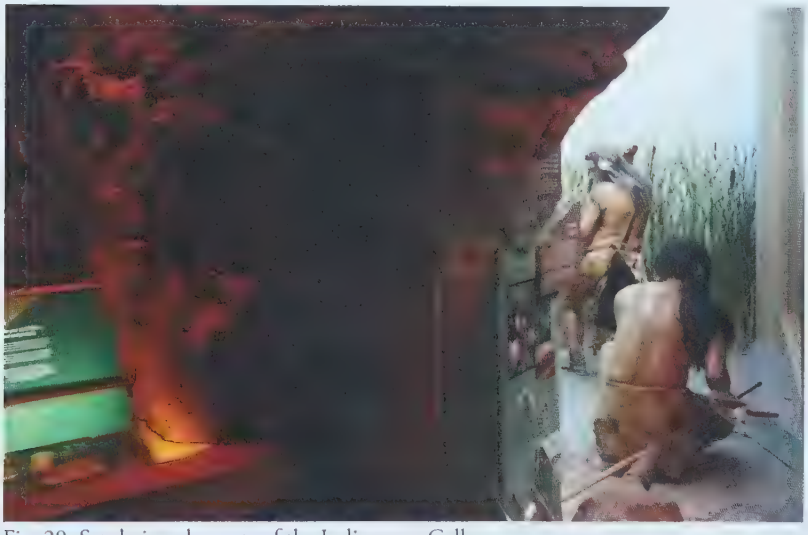
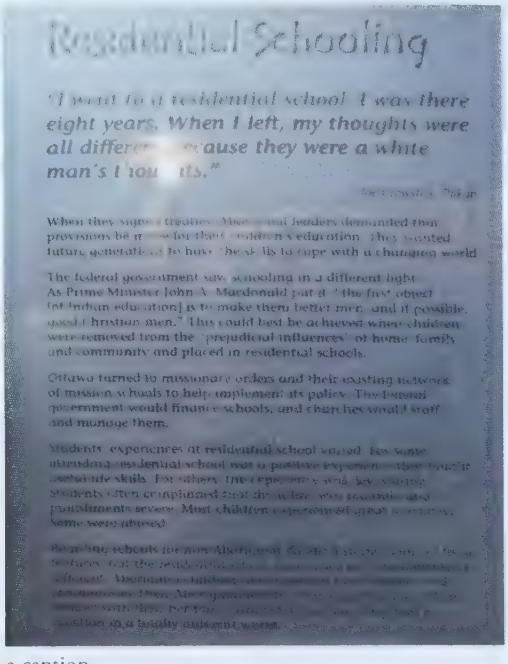


Fig. 29: Set design elements of the Indigenous Gallery

Fig. 30: View on the set design elements of the section 'Immigration, Settlement, Agriculture/Ranching' over the crack motif highlighted in all other parts of the Indigenous gallery



Residential Schooling

"I went to a residential school. I was there eight years. When I left, my thoughts were all differe[illegible] because they were a white man's thou[illegible]ts."

When they signed treaties, Aboriginal leaders demanded that provisions be made for their children's education. They wanted future generations to have the skills to cope with a changing world.

The federal government saw schooling in a different light. As Prime Minister John A. Macdonald put it, "the first object [of Indian education] is to make them better men, and if possible, good Christian men." This could best be achieved when children were removed from the "prejudicial influences" of home, family and community and placed in residential schools.

Ottawa turned to missionary orders and their existing network of mission schools to help implement its policy. The federal government would finance schools, and churches would staff and manage them.

Students' experiences at residential school varied. For some, attending a residential school was a positive experience. They made useful life skills. For others, the experience was bad. Many students often complained that the school was eccentric and punishments severe. Most children experienced great loneliness. Some were abused.

Fig. 31 and 32: Residential Schooling display case and a caption

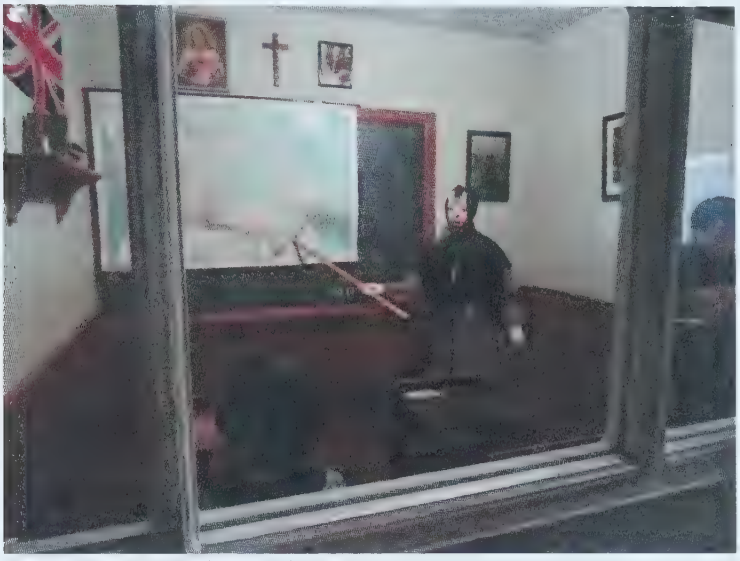


Fig. 33: Residential Schooling diorama

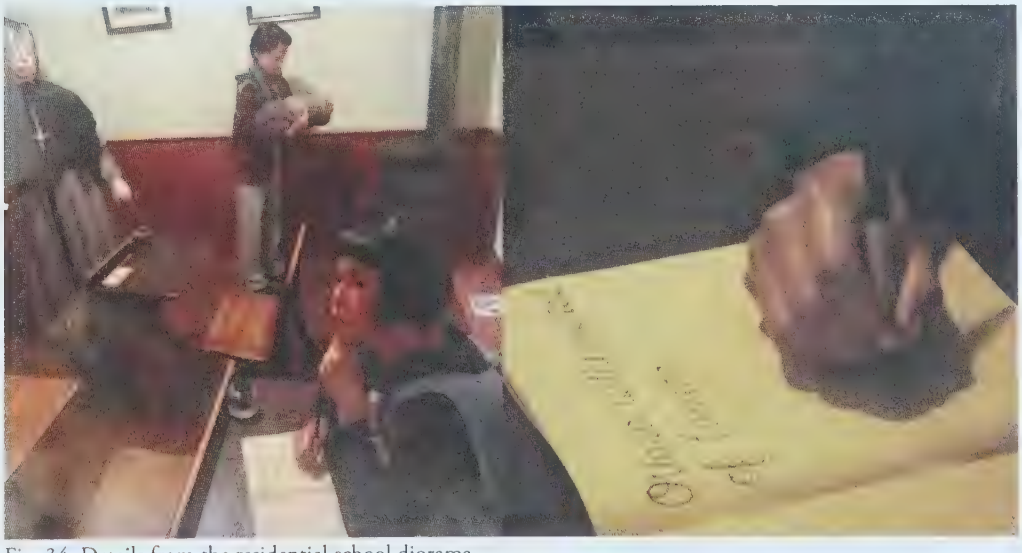


Fig. 34: Details from the residential school diorama

Haraway's meditation on care in relation to colonial heritage helps me perceive caring as a decolonizing gesture that requires speculative commitment to facing settler heritage

differently in a state of responsive attentiveness and care so it can flourish in unexpected connections and ways (Haraway, 2007).[63] Puig de la Bellacasa's account of care as an ethico-politically charged practice helps me consider mode of care as a way to challenge aesthetics and practices of representing cultural heritage. Puig de la Bellacasa warns us that caring isn't a normative moral stance (as it won't let a situation or position be formed in advance), but a speculative commitment to think how things could be different if they generated care.[64] I am drawn to the notion of care as a methodology for devising ways to represent intangible and tangible heritage because it has affective and ethical connotations; it denotes worry and thoughtfulness about an issue, but also a strong sense of attachment, a commitment to something and material doing.

In relation to this, let me share an example of different, performative perspectives on the residential school experience expressed in a short auto-ethnographic film '*PLACEnta*' by a young Cree filmmaker, writer, and director Jules Koostachin (Fig. 35 and 36). The film is

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63 In alliance with the work of Australian artist Patricia Piccinini (that in a mode of care speculates about unexpected/unwanted bio-techno-scientific experiments) and work of Australia based Euro-American anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose (from who she borrows the term 'responsive attentiveness') in debt to Australian Aboriginal practices of taking care of country), Haraway thinks about ways to face settler heritage differently and cultivate a practice of decolonizing with the help of speculative fabulations (featured in Piccinini's work) in order to possibly "help morph eroded and disowned no-places into flourishing and cared-for places" (Haraway 2007, p. 3). A more important question than "who was here first" is, how can alien and native beings linked in learning take care of unexpected heritage where the past, present and future are knotted into each other and full of what is needed for the work on natural, cultural restoration (Haraway, 2007)?

64 Care as methodology was conceptually developed by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa to encourage an ethos of care in the study of technoscience and suggests how those who study things can participate in their possible becomings. Drawing upon feminist knowledge politics, the aim is to envision care as ethico-political issues. From this perspective to care signifies an affective state, a material vital doing and an ethico-political obligation. Puig de la Bellacasa's concept of 'care' as an ethico-political issue reflects upon how things/knowledge is constructed and represented. She argues that 'politics of things' denotes 'thinkpolitics'; ways of studying and representing matters of fact has world-making effects (Bellacasa, 2011). In this, standpoints are careful, but not fixed, because they are relational and situated (Bellacasa, 2011).

about the loss of traditional wisdom and knowledge in Koostachin's family due to her mother's residential school trauma, which has cut her away physically, emotionally, and spiritually from her community and tradition.[65] The short film features Koostachin's attempt to re-discover Cree traditional childbirth teachings with the help of her mother and two sons. In the film her family gathers to re-discover a ritual of burying placenta, but the placenta does not get buried and memory is not entirely recovered in this attempt to complete the ritual. The film performs the presence of loss and trauma of the ongoing past rather than re-staging the past that produced the problem. The sense of loss and pain are much stronger here than in the RAM display, but more importantly, performed loss provokes a sense of responsibility, urgency and curiosity about that which was lost, while in the RAM display this is concealed by being represented as a matter of past. In the film, past and present are knotted together, lived, and cared for in the pastpresent.

[65] At the Truth and Reconciliation 2014 in Edmonton I was present for the Pearls of Wisdom: Recovering Indigenous Women's Honor panel discussion that explored the impact of residential schools on the generations of indigenous women and worked to find ways to restore their dignity and empower them. Koostachin shared her personal account as a daughter of a residential school survivor mother and the effects that experience had on her growing up and on the work that she does now (Shaw conference center, Edmonton, Alberta, March 27th to 30th 2014).

Fig. 35: A frame from the 'PLACEnta' film by Jules Koostachin

Fig. 36: A frame from the 'PLACEnta' film by Jules Koostachin

Care generates possibilities for other ways of relating and living and transforming ethico-political and affective perception of things by the way we represent them. Care challenges the critical distance and relation to the object of knowledge, while bringing special attention to devalued and neglected issues and relationalities – to what is "imperceptible"

within prevalent ways of understanding (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011). As Haraway wisely puts it "the crucial question has to be not 'are they original and pure?' but rather what do they contribute to the flourishing and health of the land and ethics of becoming in the lively relationalities" (Haraway, 2007, p. 11). This is why to engage with care requires a speculative commitment to neglected things that goes beyond moral disposition (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011) in order to be able to engage with the pressing question of how to inherit and face "the living-and-killing-past" so we can learn how to live in a flourishing present (Haraway, 2007). Therefore to care is to be attentive in a responsive way that can be messy, risky, inquisitive, curious, unpredictable, and demanding, but also a rewarding task that opens up/makes visible new territories and connections.

In relation to intangible and tangible knowledges, care threads together the aesthetic fabric of a thing that we study and represent while inviting into gathering what is neglected or rendered absent within the dominant discourse (human and non-human). This is particularly relevant for gathering things we need in order engage in the process of remaking colonial heritage for a life in a flourishing present. A renewed sense of objectivity and heritage makes visible the co-existence of different materialities and their mutual entanglement. As such, it facilitates a more robust, complex, lively and engaging notion of cultural heritage. It highlights interconnectedness and shifts our understanding and implications of human doing within the world that is never outside of a sticky web of connections/ecology. Therefore, the connection between intangible and tangible knowledges requires us to locate museum objects in a fabric of relationships and creative processes that

release, care for and remake a work's embodied knowledges – or, the aesthetic fabric of a work/thing/object. The object as catalyst, not object as representation. With these insights in mind I will move on to the next chapter where I want to think about performativity as a critical tool for imaging representational possibilities that do not simply reflect the world but participate in the making of the world.

Chapter III

My aim in this chapter is to distinguish how objects perform, by locating performance in the object itself. In what follows, I am interested in exploring performativity in relation to the insights from the previous chapter in order to understand how we might consider the object as a catalyst of performance instead of representation.[66] This will also facilitate thinking about the RAM display as a situation that takes place as opposed to as a representation of something 'out there'. What draws me to the concept of performativity is its ability to create instability in the production of meaning and invention of authority from which its meaning and weight is derived. As such, performativity challenges the

[66] British linguist and philosopher J. L. Austin was the first to distinguish the "performative" (saying as doing) and "constative" (saying as stating) dimensions of language. Until then, language was analyzed in terms of 'statements' and 'descriptions' and whether they were true or false. Austin gives an example of marriage ceremony where the uttered 'I do' is actual enactment, doing, fulfillment of a marriage, not reporting on a marriage. What Austin suggests is that a performative utterance is itself a form of action that may be followed or accompanied by other actions (mental, physical or utterance of further words) but it cannot be held to the standards of truth and falsehood that govern constative speech. As such it bypasses issues of validity and referentiality (it does not refer to action, but is the action) as an action in form of representation that makes question of fact and fiction secondary (Austin, 1975).

representational belief that words can mirror pre-existing phenomenon, determine what is real, and contest the excessive power given to the representation (Barad, 2003).[67]

To unpack the notion of performativity in relation to the museum and the question of indigeneity I will analyze practices that do not speak conclusively but rather bring issues, concerns, and matters of care out in to the realm of public discourse. In order to do so it is necessary for me to trace the lineage and mechanisms of how the instrumentalizing logic of representationalism works in order to denaturalize it and open the space up for thinking about these other representational possibilities.

Representationalism

To understand how the logic of representation works – how stories about cultures and the world are constructed by the way we represent things – I begin this section with a story about stories. In his book *The Truth about Stories,* indigenous author Thomas King warns us to be attentive to the stories we tell (how we tell them) and to the ones we hear, for they have a profound effect on our lives and the way we understand the world and our place in it. Similarly, representationalism plays a role in substantializing, shaping and determining our understanding of the world (Barad, 2003) and works towards discrediting other ways of knowing.

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[67] Over the past few decades performativity has been theorized as an important political intervention with ability to challenge representationalism and Western notions of objectivity that renders equal notions of "truth" and "fact" (Pollock, 1998) and idea of difference based on inherent and fixed properties of an entity (Barad, 2003). In words of Karen Barad: "Performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve" (Barad 2003, p. 802)

King states, "Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous" (King 2003, p. 9). He continues with a short story about how evil came into the world through a contest between witches, where it was determined who could come up with the scariest thing. After all sorts of scary things witches did (charms and spells, brewing potions in pots, jumping in and out of animal skins) the last witch who had done nothing up until then, told a story. King continues, "Unfortunately the story this witch told was an awful thing full of fear and slaughter, disease and blood. A story of murderous mischief. And when the telling was done, the other witches quickly agreed that this witch had won the prize" (King 2003, p. 9). After the contest was done, the other witches wanted the winner of the contest to rescind the story, but, of course," (King concludes) "it was too late. For once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (King 2003, p.10).

To understand that we have a choice of which story to tell and how we tell it is crucial for the museum context and its implication in the issues of cross-cultural representation and identity politics. This is particularly important because representationalism is deeply entrenched within Western culture, which makes it seem inescapable and without alternatives as a way of conveying information and meaning. However, representationalism is not a logical necessity but it is rooted in Cartesian thought and was shaped and established as such through socio-historical processes (Barad, 2003). Far from being neutral, (as demonstrated in previous chapters) the museum stages certain narratives about First Nations cultures through certain modes of representation and by the

way cultural artifacts are presented.

To understand how representationalism works and why it has such a power in determining what is real I turn to thinkers who work toward destabilizing the naturalized logic of representationalism. What is problematic about representationalism is that it creates division "along the lines of the knowing subject" (Barad, 2003) and sees entities as independently existing with inherent attributes/properties, thus turning relations into fixed categories, ontologically disjointed domains of subjects and objects.[68] This has created notions of difference in taxonomic terms and facilitated logic that depends on bifurcation of subject/object, and internal/external (Barad, 2003). In turn, representationalism took over a mediating function between these fixed categories promoting a belief that representations mirror reality. This forms the epistemological, political and linguistic premise of representationalism and as such obscures the relationships between knowledge and power. In contrast, understanding the workings of power requires an understanding of the casual nature of productive practices through which differential constitutions are marked and contours of all bodies human and non-human materialized (Barad, 2003).

This is why it is important to keep in mind that "exhibitions, whether of objects or people, are displays of the artifacts of our disciplines" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 434). They are stories we have crafted through a specific understanding of the world and not a mirrored, neutral, or objective reality. In museum discourse dioramas and murals (photo or

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[68] Barad traces representationalism to a Cartesian belief in the triadic structure of words, knowers, and things, with inherent distinction between subject and object, and knower and known (Barad, 2003).

painted) executed in a realistic style are often utilized to simulate authentic situations, ways of life, or moments in history (Fig. 37 and 38).

Fig. 37: Henday's negotiations with the Blackfoot diorama, RAM

Fig. 38: Mural of a Blackfoot camp according to Henday, RAM

Fig. 39: Juxtaposing of the two scenes in the display

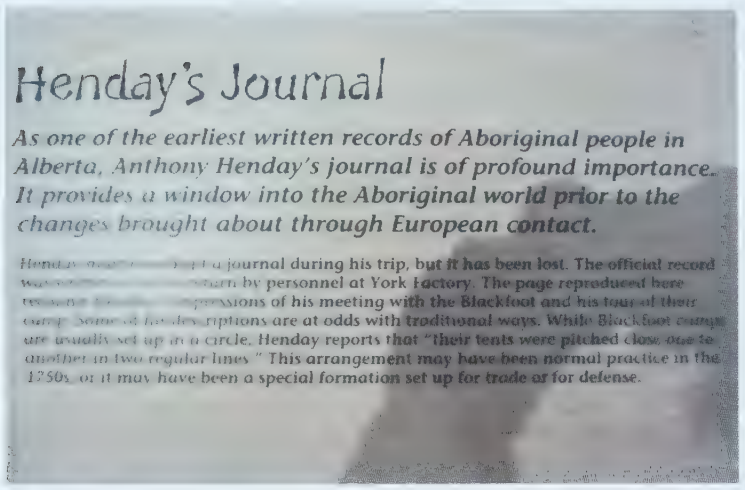

Fig. 40: Explanation label for a mismatch of the murals representation of a Blackfoot camp with the claims of the Blackfoot

For example, in the RAM's display, mural and diorama are used together to craft a story about the Blackfoot Nation while taking Anthony Henday's encounter with them as its prime source (Fig. 39 and 40).[69] By juxtaposing dioramas depicting trading and negotiations between the Blackfoot and Henday inside a teepee with a mural depicting the Blackfoot camp as described in a rewritten version of Henday's diary, Henday's interpretation is visually affirmed. This juxtapositioning implicitly communicates that Henday was there and in the presence of other Blackfoot members (witnesses) and that he saw exactly what his rewritten diary suggests.

The label (Fig. 40) added to the display after consultations with Blackfoot, who claim that their camps are not set up in rows but in a circle, somewhat acknowledges that Henday's depiction of the Blackfoot camp formation is "at odds" with Blackfoot claims. However, it

69 Even though Henday lost his diary on his way back to Hudson's Bay and others rewrote diary several times, it was used here as a more legitimate source than claims of First Nations.

goes on to speculate that this might have been for different purposes, emphasizing the profound importance of the journal as a source of information about First Nations culture prior to Western contact.[70] The display itself obscures this process of negotiations and knowledge claims. Even though only partial, the narrative displayed is presented as a closed, fixed 'totality' that has an evidence effect and substitutes and represses other possible stories. The logic of representation at work here wants us to believe in what we see. From a mimetic perspective, what is seen is what is true, and thus negates itself as representation: "it becomes what it shows; it is the 'truth'" and therefore secures "the illusions of objectivity, simultaneously licensing and foreclosing on cultural memory and its implications for critical consciousness" (Pollock, 1998, p. 11) In this way, representationalism plays a significant role in reproducing discourses of domination while foreclosing critical awareness.[71]

It is crucial here to note that representation is not a neutral mirroring of reality out there or pre-existing phenomenon, capable of determining what is real, but in actuality, it produces a certain kind of reality. What has drawn me to the concept of performativity is its ability to create instability in the production of meaning and invention of authority from which meaning and its weight is derived. It challenges the belief that representations mirror and therefore determine what is real (Barad, 2003). Rather than representational stories,

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70 The authority of Henday's diary is emphasized in the label by the clear typographic hierarchy of the text.

71 The mimetic approach can authorize the 'truth' and at the same time immunize it against questions of its completeness and content. In words of Della Pollock: "By making the past seem present in a mimetic sense, it could in fact secure its pastness, the otherness, of events crucial to understanding and acting in our historical present. It could encourage us to see the objectified events as pitiably and absolutely 'not us' rather than critically 'not not us' or otherwise in a vital dialectic with current conditions" (Pollock, 1998, p. 11).

there are other ways to tell stories that are empowering, which tell us about becoming of things in ontologically relational ways.[72]

Unpacking the notion of Performance/Performativity

In this section my intention is to map the complex field of performance and explore possibilities of performance/performativity as a critical tool for design with a focus on the issues of indigeneity and identity politics.[73] This will help me in later sections of this chapter to explore performativity in relation to display design through a concrete example from the RAM in order to understand how performativity can enable acknowledging and releasing intangible knowledges. I am interested in how certain qualities of performance can open hitherto concealed modes of representing things and generate forms/concepts that act as catalysts for open-ended processes of meaning making.

The concept of performance and performativity is important for this project because in the words of Karen Barad: "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and culture (e.g. do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions" (Barad 2003, p. 802). Situated as *a doing* (a reiteration of norms, embodied acts in specific

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72 "Personally, I'd want to hear a creation story, a story that recounts how the world was formed, how things came to be, for contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist" (King 2003, p.10).

73 Performance, besides being one element within the world of theatrical presentation, it emerges as an important critical tool and metaphor for variety of studies of different fields (arts, literature, social sciences) within contemporary culture. Being so widely employed, a complex web of critical vocabulary and application of the concept has been developed (Carlson, 2004).

sites witnessed by others and/or the watching self) and *a thing done* (discursive conventions that frame our interpretations, a pre-existing oppressive category), performance acknowledges the pre-existing discursive field (contains traces of other performances/past) in a performative present (produces experiences that only partially depend on previous experiences). As such it negotiates with regimes of power and encourages a permeable understanding of history and change, which enables it to "expose the fissures, ruptures, and revisions that have settled into continuous reenactment" (Diamond, 1996, p. 2).[74] This quality of performance perfectly facilitates interest in cultural negotiations (how human patterns of activity are reinforced or changed) and shifts attention from *what* (accumulation of data) to *how* something became, how its value is crafted and how it consequently operates in the world (Carlson, 2004). In turn this changed the mode of analysis to one in which meaning was looked for in iterations, praxis, and performance (Carlson, 2004). Therefore the focus shifts from a completed form to "performance as itself a contested space, where meanings and desires are generated, occluded, and of course multiply interpreted" (Diamond, 1996, p. 3).[75] This is what has drawn me to consider performativity as a useful critical tool for this study and for conceptualizing other ways of representing things that are not dependent on restaging and fixating the past/heritage in essentialist terms. It is particularly important to think about

[74] This way performance is part of the process of continuous production (not an entity that exists atemporally), a trajectory which the spectator intersects (Carlson, 2004).

[75] This means that the disagreement about its essence is built into the concept of performance itself (like art and democracy). Its epistemology is grounded on ways of knowing and doing that are constitutively heterogeneous, contingent and risky (not on truthful models and fictional representations) Therefore, rival use and inherent conflict are a critical value of the performance, which was developed as a concept through opposing insights and continuing dialogue that facilitates a sharper, more dense articulation of all positions and contributes to fuller understanding of its conceptual richness (Carlson, 2004).

performativity in the museum context where certain modes of representationalism have settled and naturalized as objective products of neutral scientific processes.

To bring this discussion closer to the realm of design I will compare this to Tim Ingold's insight regarding the process of making (addressed in the second chapter). He suggests that an idea is not imposed on matter (form does not reflect an idea), but rather, as I previously stated, that we can only participate in thing's becoming in the world by following the flow of forces and materials (Ingold, 2011). But how can design *do* things (in a performative way) and participate in thing's becoming, while challenging dominant assumptions?

Let me turn now to couple of design examples that speak to me about the performativity in relation to 'cultural difference.' In product design and architecture the idea of cultural difference—traditional and authentic—is often interpreted through the use of materials, styling, reiteration of function and often integrated and interpreted the design of products in a decorative manner in a mode of 'multiculturalism.'[76] As such, design does not question its conventional form and purpose but rather decoratively applies elements perceived as traditional or authentic (Fig. 41 and 42). In this way, the performative aspect of the design is not challenged, but stabilized in reproducing dominant assumptions. Difference

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[76] In recent years the field of product design has become very interested in the idea of authentic, traditional, craft, manufacturing of small series and study of craft traditions and ways of life of non-western peoples or marginalized communities for different purposes (to empower the communities, to energize itself, to introduce more interest and sentimental value to the product). The manner of multiculturalism that feeds this movement must be criticized. As Burbules states: "Where cultural dominance comes from, and how it settles into taken-for-grantedness that makes its own specificity invisible, is a question rarely explored within the multicultural framework" (Burbules, p. 258).

is exoticised while rendering it interesting as an artfact and accessible but not as a critical point of reference against which to view dominant assumptions. 'Bidoun' upholstery furniture collection by Katrin Greiling applies combination of materials, patterns and features inspired by the Bedouin lifestyle to the design of a product that otherwise maintains a conventional form of the sofa (Fig. 41 and 42). In this way, engaging with 'cultural difference' to simply add interest to a product is not necessarily a bad thing but it risks leading to problematic forms of cultural appropriation, romanticizing and reducing of the culture to a style/decorum. This might lead us to believe that we have better or equal understanding of that culture as its members.

Fig. 41: 'Bidoun' by Katrin Greiling, a collection of upholstery furniture, created for the Bidoun Lounge during the ArtDubai 2009

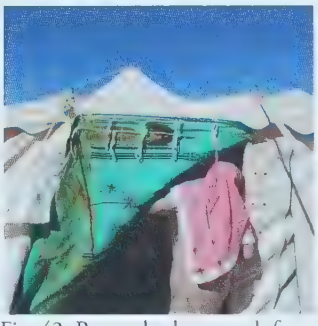

Fig. 42: Research photograph for 'the Bidoun' collection

In this thesis, I am interested in practices and designs that engage with 'cultural difference' not simply to add interest to a product, but rather that question and intervene in

narratives and sediments of assumptions (which are the outcome of particular political, historical, social and economical conditions and agendas) accumulated in a design form, process, function, use, audience, and its consequential operations in the world. By doing so these practices often create networks of those who previously have not come together to engage with 'cultural difference' in order to affect structurally and performatively the design process and its output.

Architect/artist/designer Gavin Renwick's conceptualizations of housing in the form of prints (Fig. 44 and 45) for the Dene community in the Canadian Northwest Territories interrogate architecture as a fundamental part of the colonial enterprise, encoded with W'estern ways of life and values that are not aligned with First Nations. His work with Dene communities began seventeen years ago when his PhD research that pertains to the concept of home brought him from Scotland to Canada's North West Territories. On the invitation of the Dene elders Renwick helped establish a print making facility to serve as a creative tool for the community to visually explore aspects of their culture and relationship to the land.

Fig. 43: Research photograph, Gavin Renwick's website

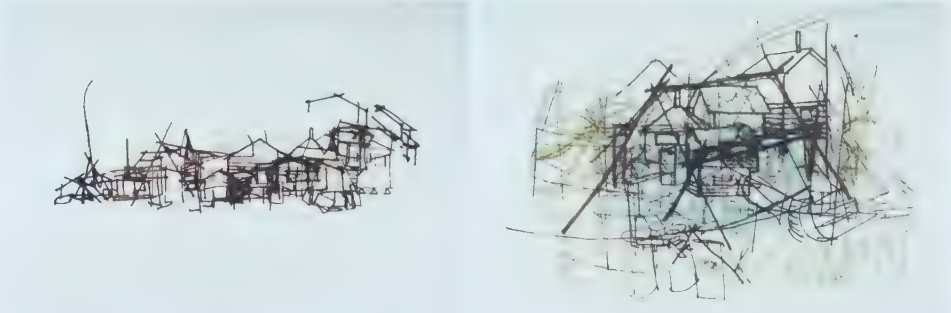

Fig. 44 and 45: Gavin Renwick's conceptualizations of housing for the Dene community in the Canadian North West Territories

The project responded to the top-down "plop-and-drop" approach of perpetual non-consultation of the Canadian government with First Nations about appropriate housing.[77] The prints pictured above, Renwick claims, should be understood as research notes in which

[77] "Plop and drop" refers to an approach of generic solutions without sensitivity and knowledge about the context and real problems.

Renwick engages Dene and Western notions of place/space and home/land together to address more appropriately housing for the Dene community.[78] On my reading, this hybridity serves as a mode of working and engagement that explores what postcolonialism can mean to us without negating the past, in order to create conditions for life in a "thick pastpresent." Tradition is acknowledged and released but not resurrected in a romantic sense, rather it is reworked through embeddedness and understanding of what traditional knowledges need to be for the community/us in a living present and for the vitality of the culture.[79] Renwick's process brings design and use closer together, which in turn helps to perceive the design as a catalyst for an ongoing collaborative process of remaking, testing assumptions taken for granted and how they collide (or not) with performative temporality of people. This type of design performs "difference within" through a conversational process of becoming and through its consequential being in the world while foregrounding design/ing as a process that unfolds over time through an ongoing collaborative process.[80] This is how design can *do* things (in a performative sense) and participate in the re-making of dominant assumptions that, in the past, have had a homogenizing effect.

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78 In the Dene worldview where there is no distinction between inside/outside, home is homeland. As a traditionally nomadic, hunter - gathering culture, they were reluctant to base their land claim solely upon Western conceptions of territory, which are sedentary and agrarian, in contrast to their own. From there evolves their understanding of homeland as a home (from personal conversation with Gavin Renwick, October 2013).

79 Embeddedness and situatedness are important so that subjectivity is not merely projection of external ideas. In this way embodied knowledge produces abstract knowledge and not the other way around (experience is directly linked to abstract/secondary knowledge). (Hilary Putnam and John McDowell in Higgins, 2002).

80 Renwick's design process is embedded, durational and relational (he spent 17 years working in Northwest Territories with Dene communities). It identifies and foregrounds an intricate web of interrelations that led to certain circumstances/structure and then tries to re-work the conditions through architectural/design interventions.

Insights from contemporary art

To investigate the idea of performativity further I will now turn to contemporary art practices that deal with the question of indigeneity and race in relation to the museum, revealing it as a site of ongoing colonial power and cultural contestation. These practices are simultaneously opening previously closed possibilities of reading museum representations and asking questions yet to be addressed. As such, they further facilitate the unpacking of the possibility of performativity and performance in the context of ethnographic museum collections of indigenous artifacts.

For example, artist Fred Wilson, working in a mode of institutional critique utilizes the museum as a critical site.[81] Wilson's practice works toward unraveling authoritative structures and locating other subjectivities rendered absent, invisible and/or visible in a certain way in relation to racial discourse (Gonzalez, 2008).[82] In *Mining the Museum: Archeology of the Archive* project (1992, Maryland Historical Society) Wilson juxtaposed historical objects that the museum had traditionally kept segregated, thereby, restricting the

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81 Institutional critique is a term used to describe activities of artists such as Hans Haacke, Louis Lawler, Fred Wilson, and Andrea Fraser who all work to expose cultural mechanisms at play in museums and other institutions. As such, these artists played a critical role in foregrounding museums as ideological institutions that produce and sustain political, social and cultural forms of containment, inequalities, hierarchy and legitimacy. Their work is interested in representation as a political act and is often site-specific, as they involve interventions in museum sites in order to draw attention to institutions and certain values that they propagate. Questions raised pertain to politics of commodification of art, including the hierarchies and the exclusion mechanisms of art as an enterprise and the museum's involvement in identity politics to name a few (Gonzalez, 2008).

82 Fred Wilson is an artist of Caribbean and African-American descent. He worked for years as a staff member and educator in major institutions/museums throughout the United States, which perhaps fueled his interest in investigations of race discourse in relation to museums for over two decades. In his work he examines the rhetoric of displays found in the institutions in order to expose the visual and spatial characteristics that shape interpretative frameworks. This includes exploration of the logics of labeling, display, lighting, sound (or absence of it) and utilizing them for his interventions (Gonzalez, 2008)

stories such objects could tell.[83] For example, one piece from the exhibition, *Metalwork 1793-1880*, joins together silver table settings produced for the elite of Baltimore society and a pair of iron slave shackles produced in the same period (Fig. 46). Politico-social appropriations of a material such as metal, communicated in the piece, make painfully palpable circumstances that produced them. Such juxtapositions create a dialogue between objects, which unlock alternate histories and in turn provoke difficult questions, crafting a display that teases out some of the more complex meanings of visual evidence otherwise not provided by conventional museum narratives about the artifacts and their history. By showing ruptures and piecing together contradictions rather than smoothing them over, the project questions not only how history is represented but also how it is obscured and how truths are produced. The practice of gathering elements that have not been able to come together across division lines created by dominant discourse creates an opportunity for a production of new meaning and politically relevant pedagogy. This example is useful for this project as it demonstrates how, instead of objects used as representations, they can be utilized for heterogeneous acts of conversation revealing "critical difference within" the display.[84]

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[83] According to visual art theorist Jennifer Gonalez this was a collaborative effort between Wilson and the museum. In order to produce the artwork, the museum provided Wilson with an open access to the historical society's permanent collection and allowed him research the site, interview staff and plan the exhibition for several months. The exhibition, as a result of this process and Wilson's own concerns, highlighted a narrative of Maryland's past pertaining to the period in which Africans were enslaved and made links to more recent history of racial violence (Gonzalez, 2008). This foregrounded "the complex ideological intersections of power and violence with high culture and the fine arts that allowed for, and depended upon, a slave economy to survive" (Gonzalez, p. 91).

[84] For example in anthropology notions about performance enabled shifting the role of the neutral objective reporter of cultural customs to that of "a native from one culture observing natives from another, creating complex play of influences and adjustments" (Conquergood in Carlson, 2004, p. 25). One concept that resulted from these insights is "a dialogic performance" that aims at bringing together "different voices,

Fig. 46: Metalwork 1793-1880, silver table settings and a pair of iron slave shackles produced in the same period (Mining the Museum, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, 1992)

James Luna is another artist, who, through performance, deals with the question of race in relation to the museum context.[85] Luna's *Artifact Piece* (Fig. 47) was first performed in 1987 in the Museum of Man in the section devoted to the Kumeyaay Indians (San Diego, USA). From Jane Blocker's analysis of Luna's piece in *Ambivalent Entertainments: James Luna, Performance, and the Archive* it is revealed that Luna's family biography is entangled with the Museum of Man (San Diego, USA). The museum had already made claims on Luna's family

world-views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another" (Carlson, 2004, p. 25).

85 Luna received a degree in art in 1976 at the University of California, Irvine. His artistic practice involves durational performances, endurance, and use of his body as a flexible sign "to accommodate a broad spectrum of projected myths" is a part of live performance tradition that utilize body endurance tactics and body transformations (Gonzalez, 2008, p. 37).

by collecting and archiving them as native specimens.[86]

In the performance/installation, Luna re-performs the museum's modes of staging and representing indigenous cultures, while challenging the romanticization of the native and the audiences' uncritical participation in inhabiting patterns offered by the museum (Fig. 48). The *Artifact Piece* involves three display vitrines (one featuring traditional artifacts, the second containing an assortment of shoes customized by Luna to look Indian and the third displaying Luna's personal belongings[87]) as well as a display case with Luna himself, lying on his back as a lifeless specimen on the sand.[88] In this way his own body and personal belongings became artifacts on display. Luna stages his native body as an authentic, wild 'Indian' body, utilizing signifiers such as nakedness, his long hair and a loincloth wrapped around his hips (with no sign of progressive treatment of the fabric such as constructed clothing), all while directing the attention of the spectator to scars on his body with the use of didactic labels.[89]

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[86] Luna's great-grandmother posed for ethnographer Constance Goddard DuBois in 1906. The photograph is not in Luna's possesion, it is archived in the Museum of Man (Blocker, 2009). Jennifer Gonzales suggest that the permanent exhibition of Kumayaay Indians offers a historical view of the Southern California indigenous groups but ignores transformations of indigenous daily life during and after colonization (Gonzalez, 2008).

[87] Display case contained Luna's collage diploma, a picture of Jimi Hendrix, divorce papers, and ceremonial rattles (Blocker, 2009).

[88] Luna was lying for several hours a day. According to Gonzalez he was so still and quiet that some visitors did not realize that he was alive until they got closer (Gonzalez, 2008).

[89] Scars tattoos and other body marks and 'abnormalities' are another signifier of exotic other in colonial discourse about the native. Also exhibiting alive indigenous people has a lineage in colonial practices since the fifteenth century until well in to twentieth (Fusco, 1994).

Fig. 47: Artifact Piece (1987-1990)

Fig. 48: The Artifact Piece

The depth and length of the display case seems to be made exactly to fit Luna's body in a relaxed lying posture and to accommodate the didactic labels that narrate Luna's

body/scars on his body in relation to drunkenness, along its length (Fig. 47 and 48).[90]

Positioned this way, the labels form a sort of barrier, a filter placed between the observer and what is observed. Simulating an expert mode of decoding the body/meaning, the labels direct attention and insure a certain kind of engagement and thought once the gaze reaches Luna's body. Even though very much alive, the display performed the pastness of Luna's body in the way it represented and ignored its liveliness in the present. This demonstrates the trick of representationalism which wants us to believe that what it represents (meaning, content) is more accessible to us than the thing it represents (Barad 2003). On my reading, this aspect of the performance questions what is at stake when a living body is presented as static, frozen, and speechless, while a label is considered more appropriate way to de/inscribe or de/code a body. It addresses the power of representation to define both past and future and speaks directly of colonial practices that take precedence in defining the parameters of nativeness (King, 2003). In this way the piece speaks directly about Euro-American fabrication of indigenous identity as disappearing by concealing it in the past and making sure that it does not exist in the present. Real, authentic native art cannot exist in the present except as an artificial or degenerative form, infected by contact

[90] Didactic labels that narrate Luna's body along its length describe the various scars by which Luna's body is marked. Example of one label: "The burns on the fore and upper arm were sustained during days of excessive drinking. Having passed out on a campground table, trying to walk, he fell into a campfire. Not until several days later, when the drinking ceased, was the seriousness and pain of the burn realized" or "Having been married less than two years, the sharing of emotional scars from alcoholic family backgrounds (was) cause for fears of giving, communicating, and mistrust. Skin callous on ring finger remains, along with assorted and happy memories" (Blocker, p. 21).

with 'progressive' Western culture.[91]

Luna staged his body according to two stereotypes of native identity that in colonial narratives are mutually exclusive: as noble savage, and as degenerate drunk Indian (Phillips, 1998; King, 2003). By seemingly conforming to representational conventions of nativeness, Luna inhabits them in a form of critical autoethnography in order to usurp them.[92] With insistence on drunkenness and by juxtaposing his private belongings of popular culture with traditional artifacts, Luna counteracts modes of representing native as already extinct and thus disrupts the pleasurable environment often crafted in museums to facilitate comfortably distant viewpoints for visitors.[93] In this way, Luna destabilizes homogenizing identity and simplification by complicating the idealized notion of 'authentic' noble savage and invites the viewer to reassess the presumed frailty of the indigenous population.

As such, performance becomes a materialized site in a negotiation between Luna's

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[91] Within colonial discourse, art and aesthetic sensibility were crucial signifiers of the civilized state and constituted the unbridgeable distance between savagery and culture (Gonzalez, 2008).
For example, the Commission that gave birth to the Canadian Tri-Council (policy for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans) states: "Since the death of true Indian arts is inevitable, Indians should not be encouraged to prolong the existence of arts which at best must be artificial and, at worst, are degenerate. The impact of the White Man with his more advanced civilization and his infinitely superior techniques resulted in the gradual destruction of the Indian way of life. The Indian Arts thus survived only as ghosts or shadows of a dead society. They can never, it is said, regain real form or substance. Indian art as such will not be revived." - From the Massey-Levesque Commission, 1951

[92] Gonzales draws on Mary Louis Pratt's book Imperial Eyes where Pratt suggests "ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their others." In contrast, "autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations" (Gonzalez, 2008, p. 37)

[93] In connection to my analysis in the first chapter of this thesis pertaining to the RAM's display that utilizes cartoon-like styling of the gallery that prevents critical reflection, Gonzalez suggested, "Museums create pleasurable environments of contemplation carefully designed to minimize historical reference to political and social contact or conflict between cultures" (Gonzalez, p. 41).

body (a doing) and the conventions of embodiment of what and how an Indian should be (a thing done), providing access to cultural meanings and concealed conventions that can be investigated (Diamond, 1996). By staging himself as an object, live and 'dead' at the same time, Luna created a situation that resisted easy classification and created opportunity for a direct and immediate experience of the complexity of the 'other' and one's own response to it. As it does not refer to reality, but enacts or produces that to which it refers, it dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition and offers a situation for the reiteration of a norm or set of norms. Thus the work recognizes and recreates a situation providing subversive pedagogic opportunity in a place and situation that otherwise offers a different kind of lesson. It shifts a pedagogic focus from a mode *to learn about* towards *learning with/through* display as situation. The works of Wilson and Luna embody critical insights into the ways museums create visual regimes that support cultural, racial, and class hierarchies. Even though they highlight different sets of concerns and utilize different exhibition methods, they are committed to foregrounding how interventions of the past intersect with living subjects and produce real-life consequences of racial injustice.[94]

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[94] In this context I would be amiss not to at least mention *The Couple in the Cage* performance-installation piece about 'two undiscovered Ameridians' by artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena. The complex work was exhibited in museums (art and natural history) and art galleries in major cities (New York, Madrid, Sydney, London, Washington). Fusco and Gomez-Pena staged themselves performing two 'savages' in a golden cage and utilized combination of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' props and clothes to parody displays of indigenous populations by colonizing countries since fifteenth and well into twentieth century. The performance revealed how categories of "fantasy" and "real" are permeable, and demonstrated how fantasy produces what is considered real, racial environments that actual people have to live and navigate. Many visitors believed that Fusco and Gomez-Pena were real primitives and looked for 'authentic' visual cues to identify them and treat them as such.

Towards Performative Display – a display that *does*

Let me now proceed in this section with exploring the idea of performativity in relation to the museum display and how it might facilitate expressing the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges. I am interested in the dilemma of how to acknowledge and release intangible knowledges through the tangible in the display without recreating the heritage, but, rather, communicate a principle that the heritage embodies. So what might performative display or exhibition design look like? How to think about the display that *does*? How to create a display as a situation where unexpected learning can happen? Fueled by these questions, let me now start by exploring these ideas through one concrete example from the RAM in a speculative, unprescriptive manner.[95]

Amongst the settler industry-economy oriented categories in the RAM's display, I was most drawn to the area that caves back from the main trajectory of the gallery where the display case titled *'Women's Work and Women's Art'* is located.[96] I wanted to think about indigenous womens' voices and embodied knowledges through an artifact in order to make

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95 I need to emphasize again that in this project I am interested in a speculative open-ended investigation of this idea, while utilizing the design as a methodology. Thus, what follows is by no means intended to be a prescriptive design solution or a method for the display design, but an exploration of the idea and what this exploration might further facilitate.

96 In a form of cluster of artifacts and images, women in the RAM's display are featured in one display case in the section *North West Territories*. This area, in contrast to well-lit diorama opening up on the main trajectory (*Initiation of a Boy*), features display cases in a visibly darker space caving back from the dominant path (which renders it secondary by being off the main trajectory spatially and by means of more dimmed lighting and attractiveness of the display). The display case featuring women's role and labor is second furthest back titled 'Women's Work and Women's Art' accompanied with the display panel featuring skin-preparation tradition passed by a grandmother to her granddaughter with small pieces of skins sticking out of the panel offering themselves for tactile investigation, which makes it the only display panel in the RAM's First Nations gallery offered for tactile investigation where everything else is based on the visual inspection of static objects and few audio installations tied to dioramas or introductory video.

visible the voices obscured in the display and to see what kind of gathering of matters of care they facilitate. In the process of my research I became curious about one particular artifact, a Cree walking stick which is presently in the RAM's archive (placed even more out of reach and sight) (Fig. 49).[97]

Fig. 49: Elder Theresa Cardinal's walking stick, Saddle Lake, Treaty 6 Cree community in Alberta, photograph courtesy of Judy Half

[97] Politically this is also important because of the RAM's preference for the Blackfoot heritage and historical interpretation (only three display cases in the entire display mention Cree even though Edmonton is situated on a Cree territory), which simplifies and reduces heterogeneity of First Nations in Alberta. This preference has a historical lineage to settler categories of good Indian (Blackfoot) and bad Indian (Cree) based on their historical cooperativeness with the settlers (from the personal conversation with Judy Half, May 2014). Since the images of the archived Cree walking stick were not available, for the purpose of work I am here using images of a stick that belongs to the elder Theresa Cardinal (pronounced Thereese) from Saddle Lake, Treaty 6 Cree community in Alberta.

Theresa, an elder from Saddle Lake, a Treaty 6 Cree community in Alberta, uses her Stick for finding medicines in the bush. Traditional knowledges about way-finding and bush medicines are knotted with those of a very personal kind and embodied in the Stick. This makes the Stick, when used by a "knowledgeable practitioner" (Ingold, 2010), a medicine-finding technology.[98] As such, we could think of the stick as a mnemonic link between storytelling, traditional and moral wisdom, and a sense of place. It is a non-verbal "pastpresent" and "natureculture" (Haraway, 2007) communication device between human and non-human persons, conscious and unconscious, between generations, traditional knowledges and what is needed for life in the "flourishing present" (Haraway, 2007). The stick could be defined as a way-finding or spatial problem solving device in multidimensional terms. Given this, how to acknowledge and release the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges of Theresa's walking stick in a gallery or museum context? [99]

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[98] Ingold suggests that enskilment and engagement in technological activities, is where a deep awareness of the world is gained through hands-on, practical experience. Thus indigenous cultures emphasize artifice over artifact. Artifice is "knowledge of a very personal kind, partly intuitive, largely implicit, and deeply embedded in the particulars of experience" (Ingold in Andrews, 2011, p. 20). Further, technology has to do with the physical as much as with the non-physical, in the sense that dreaming is a technology that facilitates hunting skills. Through dreaming, the hunter mediates his relationship with animal-persons by visualizing where the trail of the animal and his will intercept. Dreaming, then, becomes an aspect of technology and enskilment (Ridington in Andrews, 2011).

[99] Theresa's stick was given to her by an old medicine man. People in the community do not like when it is called a cane, they prefer a walking stick. The Stick is made of black diamond willow and a deer antler. Materials used contain knowledge about harvesting, use of resources, about the balance. For example black willow is always picked on the east side (with respect to sacred directions) at certain time of year which influences properties of the material (it is more flexible) and is respectful of other entities that co-exist with a tree. This is a task of a knowledgeable practitioner: if the resource is giving itself to you, you need to know what to do in return (from personal conservation with Judy Half, July 2014).

The relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges requires us to locate the work in the object's aesthetic fabric that then encompasses creative processes that are practicing, caring for and remaking the object's embodied knowledges. In this, the Cree walking stick becomes a performative object, a catalyst of performance, not a representation clearly framed. In a performative sense, the embodied traditional knowledges of the Stick could be utilized for knowledge of a very personal kind, as Theresa did, and as a scaffolding for achieving wellbeing in a "thick pastpresent" (Haraway, 2007)

The Cree walking stick looks interesting to handle and to touch, it is very sculptural in form and its use of materials emphasizes different textures, shapes and their connections within the form. If we think about it as a medicine finding or way-finding device/technology it might be useful to consider how way-finding traditionally pertained to techniques used for navigating unmarked territories and routes which, in the contemporary context, can be discussed in relation to navigation signage in built, highly organized and encoded environments and/or in relation to tourism and travel with a goal of getting between two points in the easiest manner (Fig. 50).[100]

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100 "Historically, way-finding refers to the techniques used by travelers over land and sea to find relatively unmarked and often mislabeled routes." In a contemporary context, way-finding refers to the user experience of orientation and choosing a path within the built environment. In relation to travel and tourism, wayfinding can refer to getting between two points in the easiest manner, or to navigating a location for pleasure. It can also refer to the set of architectural or design elements that aid orientation (clues inherent in the building's spatial grammar, logical space planning, audible communication, tactile elements, and provisions for special-needs users), as well as in reference to parking management strategies that help drivers find parking garages. Research around wayfinding pertains to issues of why people get lost, how they react to signage and how these systems can be improved (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayfinding, accessed July 2014).

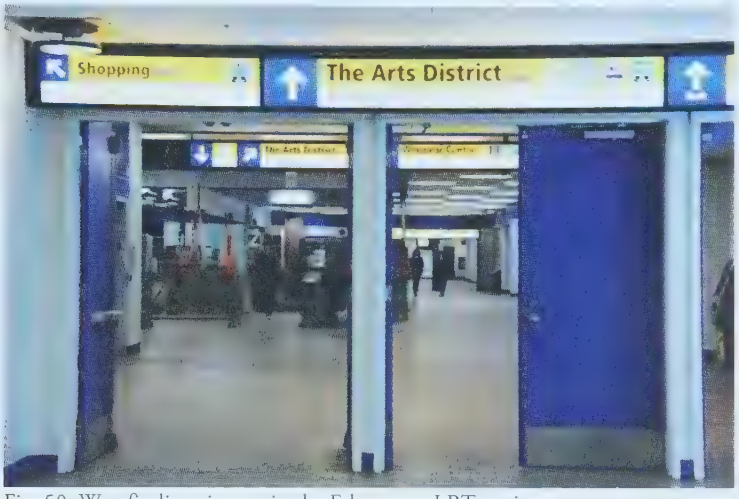

Fig. 50: Way-finding signage in the Edmonton LRT station

For example the navigational design elements such as lighting in the RAM's Indigenous display suggest a dominance of the chronological trajectory presented in synthetic, linear terms. The themes offered for cross-referencing are closely tied to the chronological narrative and mostly correspond to the settler priorities and sensibilities of industry/economy-oriented categories.[101] These way-finding cues help us find a lesson provided by the experts. This is not to say that the linear, chronological, expert information and interpretation of the work cannot be useful, but it is important to assert that it misses the experiential dimension of the work central to understanding the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges – affirmation of human experience through rich

101 These are, to reiterate: 'Living with the Land', 'Fur Trade and Early Contact', 'Dividing the Land', 'Immigration, Settlement, Agriculture/Ranching', 'Resource Era' and 'Negotiating Identities and Aboriginal Resurgences.'

subjective experience. For this project the latter is more relevant in order for knowledges and values carried by the Stick to be transferred and released.

I would like to focus here on a move away from representational and pedagogic mode *to learn about* and *of* toward more experiential and ontologically entangled *through* or *with*.[102] This helps me conceive of a display as a situation where a reciprocal relationship between, for example, the Stick and handling of the Stick can happen. In what follows I experimentally think with the Cree walking stick to explore how an ethnographic exhibition/display might become a performative and discursive space. Even if relying upon the visual form, I am curious as how to unfold the idea of the Stick so the medicine and way finding experience can be generated. How to push representation toward the primary mode of experience?

In conversation with a Cree scholar Judy Half, I developed the idea for instruction/task-based approach for expressing the Stick in a performative way.[103] By doing this, I want to bring the way/medicine-finding principle of the stick in relation to the exhibition display to enable cross-referential learning and subjective interpretation useful to

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102 The operative words *about* and *of* (semiotic analysis) insist on the distance between object and user. Removing them presents a challenge to entrenched patterns of thought and makes physical or actual experiences central to the process of signification. This also problematizes Western metaphysics that insists on dividing primary experience from secondary. Direct sensation of things forms the basis for cognition itself whereas Western philosophical traditions argue that our cognitive powers cannot reach all the way to objects themselves (Higgins, 2002)

103 My interlocutor (indigenous scholar) was telling me about the poplar tree and how it is used for teepee construction, she said "we also call it a 'tree of life,' and it is also put in the center of the teepee." I repeated "tree of life." Suddenly her eyes sparked up and she said: "here is a task for you. Find a poplar tree, you can go to river valley. Find it, go up to it and look at the base of the tree. You will see the life." My mind immediately thought of "seeing the life" in some metaphysical sense, but she interrupted my thought saying: "It is full of life, so many different insects live there." It came to me: life, the liveliness she talked about is about entangled coexistence (personal conversation with Judy Half, July 2014).

the viewer. I hope to open up an eventful dimension of a space by triggering a link between imagination (which moves toward the unknown) and first hand experience (Higgins, 2002). I will do this by expressing the idea of the Stick through the development of an instruction for the viewer/participant. This approach is also indebted to the work of the mid twentieth century art practice Fluxus.[104] Drawing upon Fluxus work gives me the insight that an embodied, performative model of vision can occur only through the viewer's participation, "by replacing the illusion of a unified field or representation with primary experience" (Higgins, p. 22).[105] Fluxus experience is useful for this project as it worked toward making intangible aspects of the work palpable through the experience that occurs in interstitial locations between objective and subjective (Higgins, 2002, p. 21).[106] Thus a world 'out there' is combined with a self 'in here' (Higgins, 2002).[107]

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104 Fluxus began in the 1960s as an international network of artists, composers, and designers. It resists categorization as an art movement, collective, or group and defies traditional geographical, chronological, and medium-based approaches. It is a "way of doing things," a philosophy of experience that sometimes communicated through the art form (Friedman, 1998). Fluxus practices employ a 'do-it-yourself' attitude and every day activities to bring experiential dimension to the viewers, thus often blurring the boundaries between art and life. Fluxus is a way of viewing society and life, a way of creating social action and life activity. Thus essential function of Fluxus artworks is to help us practice life, an ever-changing self in an ever-changing world.

105 Or in other words, through the deconstruction of disembodied/normative gaze and standardized ways of seeing and by locating seeing in the physical body of a viewer. Hannah Higgins describes this in relation to Fluxus work: "The effort to make this happen can be described as the performative element of all Fluxus work: the audience has to do something to complete the work" (Higgins, p. 25).

106 "Even where Fluxus works are made to be seen, they are often also intended to be felt" (Higgins (?) p. 31). This is of particular importance for this project, because it challenges the idea that "experience is mediated by clearly delineated senders (objects) and receiver (subjects) of information…In (art as) experience, actuality and possibility or ideality, the new and the old, objective material and personal response are integrated in an experience in which they are all transfigured" (Higgins, p. 21). "Fluxus artists have consistently described their work, particularly the objects they produce, as performative" (Higgins, p. 25).

107 David Michael Levin calls this "ontological thinking" which implies "a directive to incorporate into one's sense of self a greater sense of being than produced by the visual paradigm of truth (that originates with the Italian Renaissance), or by scientific rationalism…Ontological thinking is radically different: it engages us in

The experiential learning utilized by Fluxus corresponds well with indigenous traditional ways of knowing where learning and gaining skill is inseparable from the bodily movement, motion and travel (with skilled practitioners) over storied landscapes. Skills are acquired through embodied practice and by using the mnemonic cues of places encountered (Andrews, 2011). This kind of ecological information and experiential knowledge (one that allows us to experience things ourselves) is important for understanding our place in the world (Edward S. Reed in Higgins, 2002). It is through experiential knowledge, a close rapport with an object of scrutiny, that discovery and invention of new levels of meaning are possible (Higgins, 2002).[108]

So what type of performative experiential knowledges of the Cree Walking Stick could come about through an instruction? What emerged through further conversation with my interlocutor were knowledges and values in relation to harvesting and moving in responsible and care-full way toward non-human and human persons (not stepping on the lines on the ground, not stepping on trails of ants, knowing when and where to harvest). We talked about experiential learning, and traditional walking routes, many of which are lost due to government policies that do not allow the burning of lands in a manner that was

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the opening wholeness of our being, and 'takes place' as much in the life of our feet and hands and eyes as it does in our head, our brains, or our 'mind'" (Levin in Higgins, 2002, p. 37/38).

[108] Higgins argues that linking learning to life is an overlooked function of education. Not to neglect information gathering and analysis, but to access it on "as needed" basis, combining information and ideas, imagination that encourage emotional and social engagement (performative mode of education).

traditionally a way of taking care of the land and its ecosystem.[109] This resulted in the overgrowth of certain areas and the loss of old trails. In this sense, way-finding becomes trail-building/way-making. This resonates with cultural revitalization initiatives in indigenous communities that are re-building paths to the traditional knowledges that have been lost due to hegemonic colonial practices. In this way, we can imagine a way-finding as trail building, recovering a memory, taking on a challenging task, acting in an un-prescriptive manner while being responsible and caring. Here is the task my interlocutor set me:

"Imagine way finding as trail building, you are standing somewhere where the grass is tall, in front of or in the midst of overgrown terrain, there is no trail. You need to make one for your self."

In order to bring the experience and the liveliness of the stick I performed the task/instruction given to me by my interlocutor. This became a way of inhabiting the knowledge carried by the Stick by practically engaging with the Stick within the concrete environment. As such, this performative experiment challenges approaches toward material culture that lead to its objectification. In contrast I draw upon an approach that puts emphasis on engaging with the creative processes that bring things – the stick into being (Ingold, 2010).

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[109] This also represents a process of turning a land/homeland into a property that limits its meaning and function.

Fig. 51 a and b: Looking for the overgrown area for my performance of the Walking Stick instruction at the river valley (Edmonton, AB)

I walked around the Edmonton river valley to find an area for my performance. I entered the area overgrown with deep grass, shrubs, bushes, and trees where trails became more narrow and overgrown (Fig. 51a and b). I stood on a trail and made a sharp turn to face the overgrown area with no trails. This is the material I chose to work with in order to make a trail. I had a stick I found along the way, a dry long straight branch of a poplar tree that was still attached to a living tree. I wondered for a moment should I have a goal, a point 'B' that I need to reach, maybe a poplar tree some twenty meters away? That would give me some kind of focus, provide me with a bit of ease, distract me from the fact that my foot needs to enter deep grass not knowing what awaits me at the bottom.

All sorts of phobias arise in these kinds of moments when facing the un-known, ones that well trodden paths protect us from.[110] Nevertheless, I decide to focus on the movements of my body and the stick making a trail instead of focusing on the 'destination.' I make a first step filled with anxiety.[111] What a relief when nothing terrible happens. I remember my dad and grandpa's lessons when we were kids and went hiking. They would always get us walking sticks as we entered the forest, taught us to use them for probing the ground of our next step, a hole we want to investigate, a log or a rock that we wanted to move… in order to learn to move cautiously, to observe what happens before we actually do it, to warn other creatures of our intentions. All this comes back to me, as I am getting ready to make my way through the overgrown area.

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[110] For example, I wondered if there are any snakes this far north, I heard there are some in the Calgary area, which is not that far away. Or, what if I come across something dead. Also, this performance made visible how much junk from media and everyday life gets stored in the unconscious and is activated when facing the un-known. I had a similar experience on my bicycle trip through Morocco and part of Europe, besides being physically demanding, the trip was even more emotionally and mentally demanding. I constantly had to deal with and work through my own and internalized prejudices about my body's abilities, feelings of vulnerability, exposure, and lack of control. Soon, I noticed how these feeling of anxiety were actually aching my body, but when I would worked through them, my body knew exactly what to do.

[111] This recalls the crack metaphor I used for my research paradigm as a means of way-making and moving through the terrain of my research, unknown to me when I started. I had a feeling I was moving through something really dense, and this would fill me with anxiety, but with persistence things or terrain would open up, moments would come when I could run, slide, dance from excitement, with a feeling that I am right where I am supposed to be.

Fig. 52: Performance with the stick – probing

Fig. 53: Performance with the stick – revealing

I use the stick to probe, to make a sound on the ground, to move the branches, to reveal what is on the ground before I step on it (Fig. 52 and 53). With the stick I make my

way through different overgrown areas, bushy and tall as me, and grassy up to my waist. I have to negotiate each step through different terrain as plants whip my legs, arms, and sometimes even my head. All of these entities respond differently to my movements and force me to deviate from my intended path due to terrain configuration (branches, indentations, rocks) and growth of plants. I am in a trail-making mode; it is exciting. I am not looking back, the 'accomplishment' behind me interests me less as I am entirely drawn to being in the trail-movement as it unfolds, 'becomes.' What comes forth is cooperation between the stick and me; I am participating in the becoming of a trail through the density of heterogeneous materials and living entities and feeling their resistance and movement. In this way, trail making becomes a collaborative process within and in response to a situation as it unfolds in time.[112] The performance with a stick could be read as a way of doing anthropology *with*, rather than *about* or *of* (Ingold, 2010). Thus, learning becomes a form of research that generates new knowledge and understanding along the trail as it unfolds. As such, a performative exploration of a stick through a task suggested by my interlocutor foregrounds an experiential dimension of a stick, of a trail making "along which past, present and future environments are shaped, perceived and understood" (Ingold in Gunn, 2008, p. 324) and where "moves, not truths, are recounted" (de Certeau in Gunn, 2008, p. 324).

In this chapter, analysis of concrete examples and drawing upon performance theory helps me understand how performativity can facilitate acknowledging and releasing

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112 When talking about practice as a way of doing theory Wendy Gunn suggests: "Along this path, not only is the practitioner revealing to others something of what has gone unnoticed, s/he develops an ability to listen to others' tellings. Engaging in this way, practitioners are learning with others and making relevant mappings of human experience" (Gunn, 2008, p. 324).

intangible knowledges through works that function as situation/process, whether the catalyst is a human body, object or assemblage of objects. Instead of using objects as representations, this analysis helps me discern how objects might *do* things (in a performative sense) and participate in re-making of dominant assumptions that have homogenizing effects. Understood as an ongoing collaborative process, design/objects/things can indeed do things, can perform. In what follows, I want to elaborate how the written and practical components of this thesis relate to each other.

Thesis exhibition

The aim of the fieldwork and research I have presented you with in this last section is to express and explore the liveliness and experience of the Stick in a performative way, to propose a way to work with heritage that moves representation to the experiential dimension. As such, the performance with a stick brings in to the written part of my thesis a glimpse of the practical part of my research. Throughout this research I have been developing my argument in two different modes: through theory and writing and through design practice as a way of doing theory.[113] Thus, in this section I want to make visible the practical component of my work by mapping out a plan for my thesis show. Without offering a final solution, I want the exhibition to make the research process visible and ongoing within the gallery

113 Initially, I had an idea of integrating and making visible these two modes of working in a thesis document as they have been informing each other throughout the research, but being absolutely overwhelmed with the writing in an academic manner (in English) for the first time in my life, it happened that they have not had time to inhabit each other in my writing as much as I might have wanted. Nevertheless they remain a valuable lesson of developing an argument in two different modes.

space. As such the exhibition would serve as a way to further speculate, test, and probe, rather than function just as a final presentation of my work.

The exhibition will have a layout in the form of chapters/themes that, as the space allows, can be read in different orders (Fig 54). To contextualize my research, I will present visual explorations of the RAM's First Nations gallery that I talk about in chapter one of this document. This will include the crack motif from the RAM's display, one that provides a cartoon-like background of pastness for the spatial narrative about First Nation's cultures (Fig. 55 and 56), juxtaposed with a crack motif as a metaphor for opening up concrete surfaces for lively growth (Fig. 57). As such a crack motif is a way-making/finding tool for opening up the museum territory, an in-between space full of potential for thinking differently about heritage (Fig. 58). The research aim was set to serve as a guiding tool, but I also wanted the unpredictability of the crack to take me wherever it needed to go.

Fig. 54: FAB gallery floor plan + Exhibition diagram

Fig. 55: The crack motif, a view from inside of the Aboriginal gallery on to the RAM's second floor

Fig. 56: Photomontage of a view from inside of the Aboriginal gallery through the crack on to the rendering of the new RAM

Fig. 57: The crack motif that I have chosen as my research paradigm/metaphor

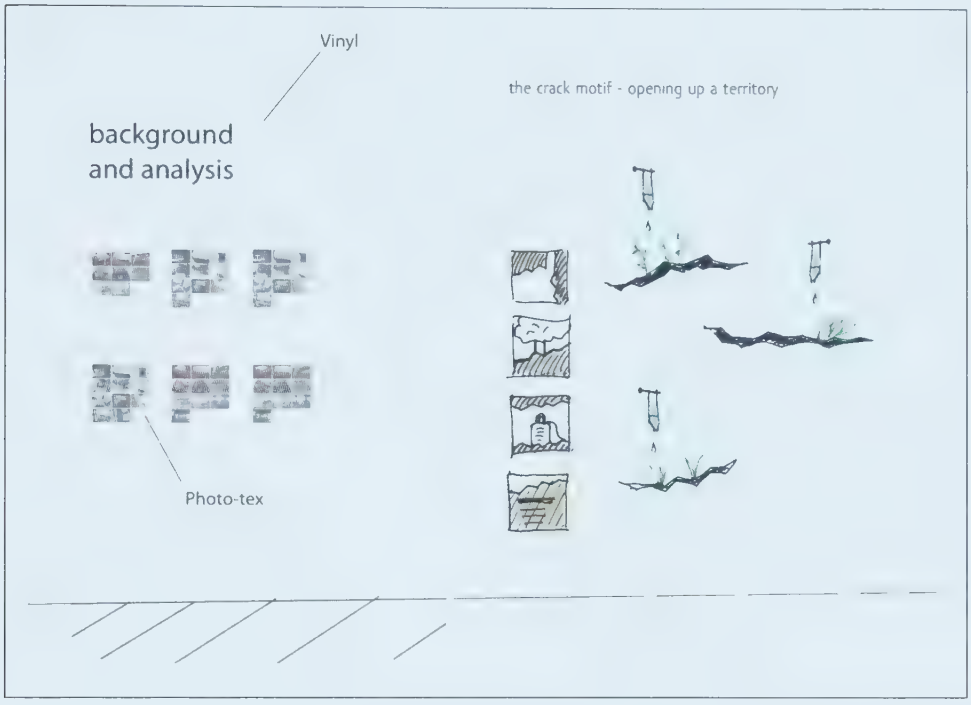

Fig. 58: section '**a**' – background, analysis and opening of the museum territory

At the very beginning of my research process, before I started writing, I created small models to help myself make distinctions between what could be understood as an 'object' and what as a 'thing.' These models were useful for developing a certain kind of vocabulary, familiarizing and sensitizing myself for the project that I was undertaking. In the form of thinking tools models helped me distinguish between the nature of a 'thing,' and an object. On the southwest wall of the exhibition space I will show small models that facilitated this process. Similarly, to make visible the museum operating in a mode of 'cultural diversity' and to explore what it could mean to engage with 'cultural difference' genuinely, I have created

three-dimensional models that will function as a small instruction pieces and offer the experience of working in both modes (Fig. 59).

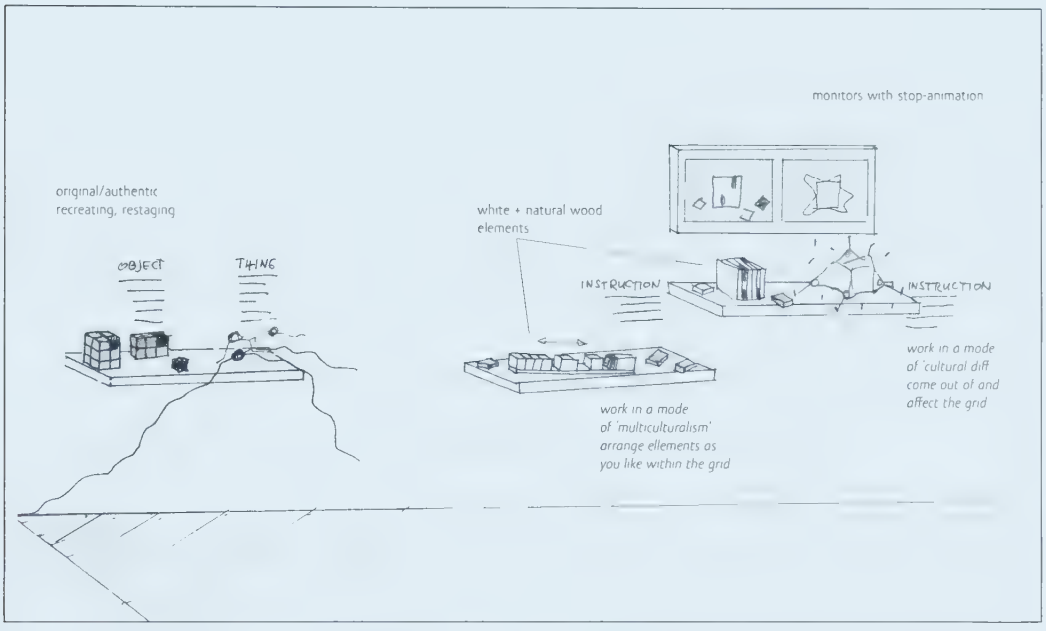

Fig. 59: section '**c**' – experiments/exercises with the idea of 'thing' and 'object' and concept of 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference' in relation to museum.

To foreground how liveliness of heritage can be explored and expressed I will show video footage of my Stick performance accompanied with the textual instruction of the Stick (Fig. 60). The projection of the performance is not a proposal for a display of the Cree walking stick, but is rather a way of making visible the Stick's embodied values and knowledges, while foregrounding a performative engagement with the heritage of the Stick as a valuable way to work.

"Imagine way finding as trail building, you are standing somewhere where the grass is tall, in front of or in the midst of overgrown terrain, there is no trail. You need to make one for your self."

A reference on how a knowledgeable practitioner such as Theresa Cardinal uses the Stick in very precise and nuanced ways will accompany the projection. It is important to acknowledge this in order to remember that performative exercises in which visitors can participate are not in function of making us knowledgeable about the Stick as Theresa is (which is not possible through a one gallery visit and it might also lead to problematic forms of cultural appropriation), but experiments with how to engage with the heritage of the Stick experientially.

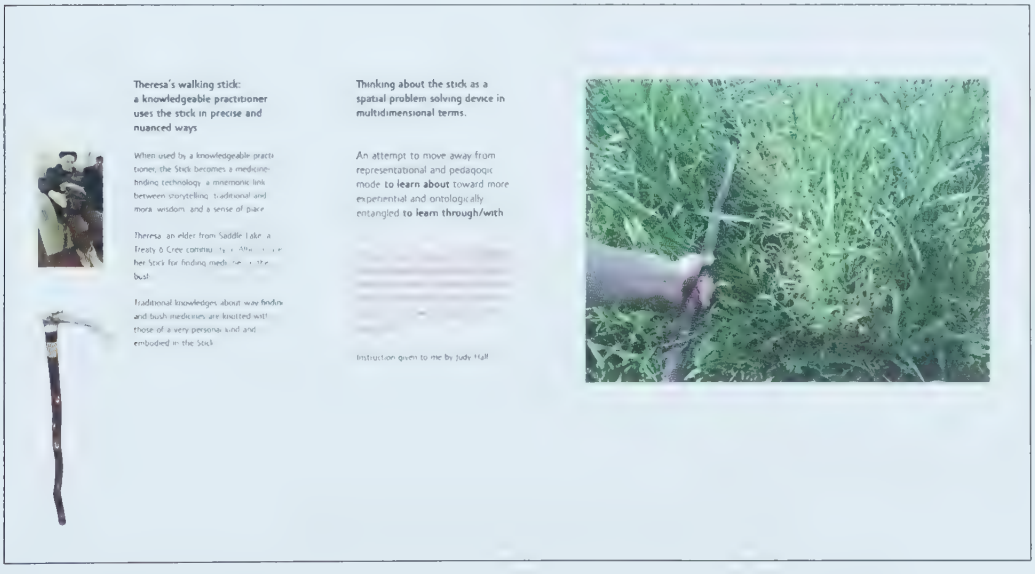

Fig. 60: section '**e**' – Instruction of the stick and a video projection of the performance

Still curious about how to express the liveliness and experience of the Stick within the gallery context in a performative way, I am developing exercises inspired by the performance with a stick. The challenge here is that a gallery is a well-trodden place as opposed to the overgrown landscape of my performance.[114] So how to express the experience of the Stick within the gallery space performatively? How to reverse the transformation of land to 'property' that limits land's meaning and function, with a lesson of the Stick? How to express the knowledge and values of the Stick by creating certain social and spatial relations for the viewer through an exhibition as a space/situation that is unfolding through these relations?

Ultimately, based on my experiences with trail making through the overgrown terrain as well as a bicycle trip I did some years ago, it seems useful to propose that a well-trodden trail/path can become un-known terrain too.[115] Thus I came up with an installation that will act as a base for further interventions by the visitors. On walls and the floor of one corner of the gallery I will install perforated abstract forms of different shapes and sizes. A spool of thread will act as a stick full of capacity for trail/way making. I will ask visitors to intervene, to take a stick for a walk (Fig. 61).

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114 On my way to the Edmonton river-valley when looking for an area to perform the task, I notice how on familiar, well-trodden routes, I move with ease, automatically, without noticing.

115 I am referring to *Notes on Moving* (2007), an art-research project where I combined adventure in the form of a physically demanding expedition (nomadic, a four month long bicycle trip) and my art practice. In this durational autoethnographic performative study I used my body as a medium of research into a geo- and body politics. I explored the possibilities of self-knowledge that can stem from the body and the investigation of the body and movement. I was interested in questioning limitations we put on ourselves, borders imposed by others, the meaning of territory, identity and home. The project made me aware how the insertion of my body into the research process revealed subtleties and conditions that would otherwise stay invisible to me if I explored the task as an outsider and purely intellectually. In the form of art-research exhibition, project was presented in Italy (Michelangelo Pistoletto Fondazione) and in Croatia.

"Take a stick for a walk. Gather four things you that you like care-fully."

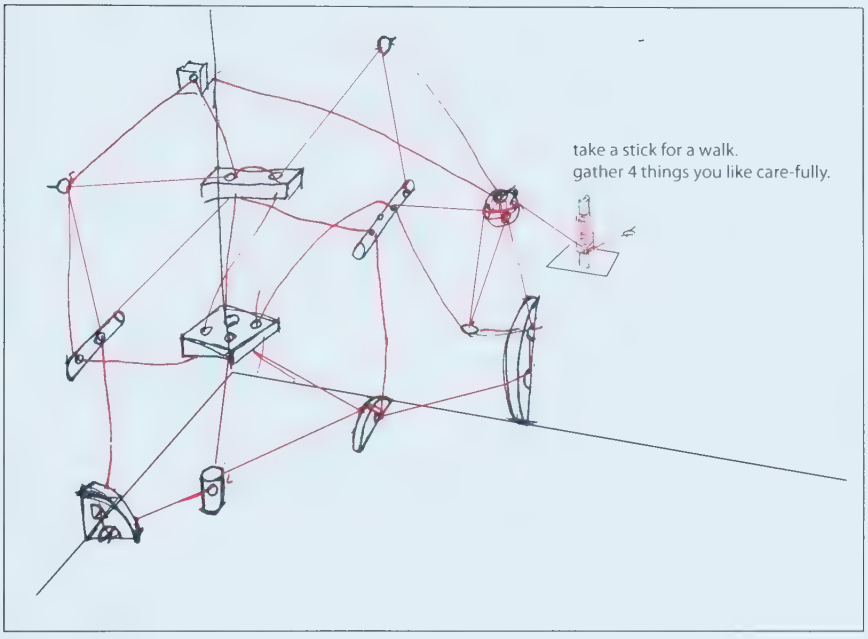

Fig. 61: section '**b**' – corner installation, taking the stick for a walk, gathering things with a care

By moving curiously, attentively, and differently from habit a discovery can happen and a familiar space will unfold differently and a performative dimension of the space and the Stick could happen. Therefore I decided to use a narrow space that looks towards the street as another space for the intervention. I am planning to install a shelf (same kind that I am using for the models in the show) with a vinyl title 'museum' above it and small hooks installed on the shelf and on the wall beside and above it. I will initiate mapping of the possibilities for a postcolonial museum by indicating three concepts that I explore in this

thesis, leaving the visitors to expand the boundaries and connect their concerns in relation to a museum. This exercise will serve to imagine the museum differently from what we are conventionally used to.

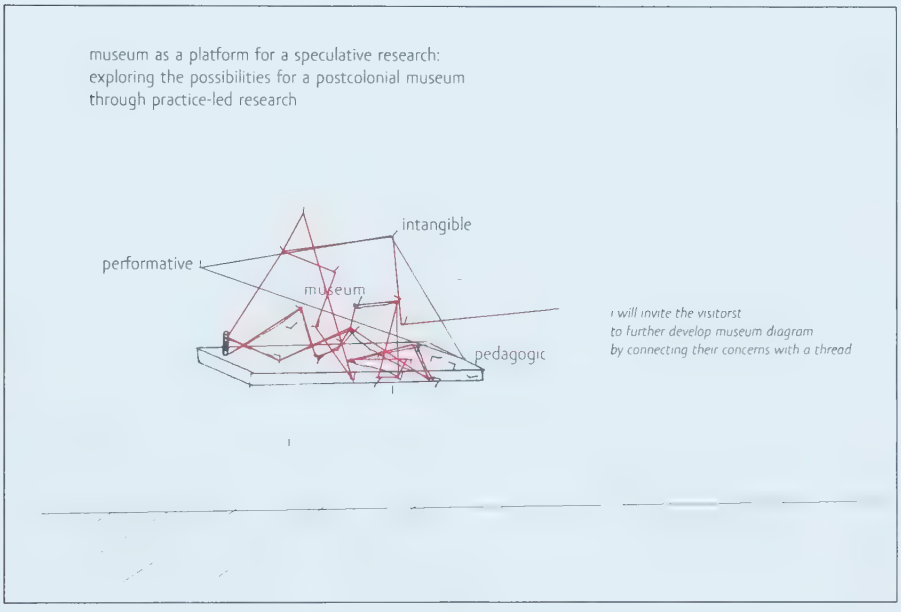

Fig. 62: section '**d**' – my working diagram translated spatially and inviting the visitors to intervene with their suggestions

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have striven to manifest a web of concerns, where the scope of this thesis and timeframe has allowed me to investigate some aspects more thoroughly than others.[116] The aim of this thesis is not to offer concrete solutions but rather to serve as an open-ended gathering of different concerns surrounding cross-cultural representation through exploration of the relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges. As such, I see this research as a catalyst for further investigations, questions and remaking of the museum territory. And at the end this is precisely what I have to offer.

Wanting to operate in a situated, embedded way I took Royal Alberta Museum as my case study, with the contribution of other situated examples that came from art and design. I worked through and with these examples in alliance with theoretical accounts that offer a

116 This is only a partial picture of the role of museum and its evolving possibilities, one that ignores the importance of taking the museum outside of itself and into the landscapes of the people its collections represent.

renewed sense of objectivity, pedagogy and representational possibilities. What has emerged is a move from an expert mode toward relational acts of conversation that make visible the co-existence of different epistemologies and epistemic forms that enable re-describing things in a mode of gathering with a mode of care, that is not prescriptive, but attentive and speculative. Such an approach reveals our attachments to things we care about and enables a gathering of those who previously have not been able to come together. This enables things to become "thicker" (Haraway, 2007) and alive. These insights also made it possible to imagine an exhibition/display as a performative space, a situation that unfolds over time, as well as a collaborative process that is not restricted to the exhibition space. As such, exhibition/display combines and is attentive to physical environments, social aspects and pedagogic opportunities.

Overview of the territory

As a designer, I find it crucial to think about the narratives and assumptions that materialize certain concepts. It makes interventions more interesting and effective, as well as possible to evaluate and build upon.[117] Tracing the lineage of present representational modes and design cues of the RAM was an important task. Therefore, in chapter one I traced the

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117 By this I mean my own interventions in this thesis but also RAM's intervention of reimaging itself in a new building and location. "It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a brand new museum from the ground up, it just doesn't happen very often and this is a chance to completely re-imagine a museum."
—Peggi Ferguson Pell, president of the Friends of the Royal Alberta Museum

"This is an unprecedented opportunity to create a new provincial museum in the heart of Alberta's capital city that will bring our province's past, present, and future to life in new and compelling ways."
—Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach

historical, intellectual, ideological and political lineage of natural history museums, in order to develop a more robust understanding of how and why natural history museums promote certain modes of representation and have foreclosed others. This study revealed the connection between certain design cues in the RAM and specific historical, political, and economic drives that fueled the emergence of natural history museums. It made visible the historically vested nature of the museum and its role in institutionalizing Western assumptions about a cultural object's value and authenticity. This presents a considerable challenge for the aesthetics and practices that want to expose and acknowledge the "lively life of things" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011) in a cultural museum context. In relation to this, the concept of cultural difference was important for distinguishing how not just human identities are socially constructed, but also the identities, values and authenticity of objects and things. By denaturalizing modes of cross-cultural representation embraced by natural history museums I wanted to open up space for excluded representational possibilities and to understand what poses an obstacle for expressing the intangible in a tangible museum display.

Building on this, chapter two served to investigate the relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges, as it facilitates more complex, lively and engaging notion of cultural heritage, and as such challenges conventional modes of cross-cultural representation rooted in expert discourse. Thus it was pertinent for the task to interrogate assumptions and a socio-historical lineage of Western knowledge claims that define what can count as knowledge and act reductively on the subjectivities, agencies and embodied accounts of truth

(Haraway, 1988) and therefore on the complex fabric of heritage (Munjeri, 2004). Furthermore important analysis was presented of a situated example from the RAM in alliance with thinkers who particularly challenged Western rational thought and who worked toward developing tools and a vocabulary to address things in their ontological complexity and liveliness. What emerged is an understanding of the importance of embodied accounts of truth (partial perspectives) that form a condition for a "usable doctrine of objectivity" (Haraway, 1988). From this perspective an object is not passive, a mere representation, but can be understood as a lively catalyst. This insight is accompanied with renewed notion of lively and processual nature of heritage, where authenticity and expertise can be understood as practices of care that thread the aesthetic fabric of the work and are inseparable from it. From this perspective traditional knowledges and pedagogic opportunities that generate the transfer and vital remaking of these knowledges play an important role. In fact they are constitutive of the work.

The ethical import of the interventions discussed in chapter two also shifts pedagogic attention from the banking model (Freire, 1972; hooks, 1994), toward what is needed for a life and work in "flourishing present" (Haraway, 2007). This precipitates a move away from the old paradigm of *to learn about* toward *to learn from/through* and leads to the construction of new knowledge about old objects as part of our cultural revitalization projects. This way of learning can be understood as an exploratory practice, as itself is a form of research that generates new knowledge (Gunn, 2008). So how can these new ethical and aesthetic demands provoke new modes for representing heritage in ethnographic collections? Can they

produce displays more responsive, caring and sensitive to various forms of knowledge with an aim of expanding indigenous governance over their heritage?

What emerged through the second chapter was that the relationship between intangible and tangible knowledges requires us to locate the work in the fabric of relationships and creative processes that are releasing, caring for and remaking the work's embodied knowledges – the aesthetic fabric of the work/thing/object. That is to say an object as catalyst of performance, not object as representation. So what is at play when an object is utilized as representation as opposed to in a performative manner? How do we represent a performative nature of an object without reifying it in visualist terms and without creating another ethnographic object/document? How do we create displays as situations for open-ended production of meaning? Consequently how can this perspective on the heritage change the understanding of expertise and recognition of different modes of knowledge and learning? Could this provoke different pedagogical attentiveness that shifts the definitions of the museum's audience, learning modes, priorities and content, consequently affecting how and what is represented in ethnographic collections?

Unpacking the relationship between the tangible and intangible helped me imagine modes of representation that are curious, inquisitive, messy, risky, and attentive to the gathering of what is neglected or rendered absent within the dominant discourse. Modes that take the pulse from difference, partiality, and incompleteness based on the heterogonous acts of conversation and unexpected connections driven by care.[118] As such they do not

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118 A renewed sense objectivity and pedagogy that provides ways of constructing new narratives about old

homogenize and simplify things to enable easier classification and control over them. This prompted me to think about performativity as a critical tool for imagining representational possibilities that do not simply claim to reflect the world, but rather, perform world-making.

Thus in chapter three, before unpacking the idea of performative display, I wanted to discern how the logic of representationalism works. This revealed representationalism not as a neutral mirroring of the reality out there or as a pre-existing phenomenon, capable of determining what is real (and thus obscuring the relationships between knowledge and power), but as actual materialization of a thing, a creation of a certain kind of reality that has real-life effects on those represented (see third chapter case study of James Luna's *Artifact Piece)*. So performativity as a critical tool able to create instability in production of meaning and invention of authority from which meaning and its weight is derived was useful in challenging the belief that representations mirror and therefore determine what is real (Barad, 2003). One lesson of performativity as a critical tool is that we participate in thing's becoming. In this way the world is not a place of subjects and objects but of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations that shift over time (Bennett, 2004). This approach "entails imagining a knowledge place as not one of enclosure but of actual movement" (Gunn, 2008, p. 332) where "moves, not truths, are recounted" (de Certeau in Gunn, 2008, p. 324). Concrete examples from contemporary art and design made visible these moves as openings for how we can participate in the re-making of

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things based on heterogeneous acts of conversations could provoke research directions that might explore means of creating displays that act as open-ended collaborative processes of meaning making. Participatory design methods and co-design tools for developing exhibition concepts for collections involving cross-cultural representation seem as an important research direction in that sense.

dominant assumptions that have a homogenizing effect. By defining boundaries and making what has gone unnoticed visible (the relationship between knowledge and power) these performative practices make moving across these boundaries and their reshaping possible. As such, they create contexts for learning experiences and for collaborative production of a new meaning, while resisting programmatic rules and representations.[119]

Analyzing concrete examples helped me to imagine performative ways of acknowledging and releasing intangible knowledges in an open-ended production of meaning vital to our present, rather than through a corpus of representations and information. [120] In an experiment with Theresa Cardinal's Cree walking stick, I demonstrated how an object could unfold as a situation/process that pushes representation of the Stick toward the experience of the knowledges embodied by the Stick. This emphasized creative processes that bring things – the Stick into being (Ingold, 2010). Thereby challenging approaches toward material culture that objectify things and thus limit their identity/liveliness. Performing the instruction of the Stick helped me discern how a design/object/thing might *do* things (in a performative sense) and demonstrated one way of how an object and its embodied knowledges could be expressed performatively rather than as

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119 In the words of Wendy Gunn, "Knowing along the way is integrated along a path of movement. Along this path, not only is the practitioner revealing to others something of what has gone unnoticed, s/he develops an ability to listen to others' tellings. Engaging in this way, practitioners are learning with others and making relevant mappings of human experience" (Gunn, 2008, p. 324)

120 Irit Rogoff defines the radical pedagogy in the museums through the question of "access" that rejects the idea of simplicity of accessibility of information and asks questions: "how do we get to know things, how do we get to take part in them, how do we have a position, how do we intervene not as a response to a demand to participate but as a way of taking over the means of producing the very questions that are asked" (Rogoff, 2006, p. 8).

representation.[121] Understood as an ongoing collaborative process, design/object/thing can indeed *do* things, can perform. This makes it possible to imagine a display that does not want to capture or represent a knowledge, but as an ongoing process of learning/investigation through which new knowledge is generated. An exhibition can be understood as a space/situation that is unfolding through social and spatial relations attentive to physical environments, social aspects and contain the potential for collaborative meaning making. The idea of performative exhibition spaces points toward more flexible and fluid spaces that, instead of serving a corpus of representations and information, create a context with opportunities for perception and action, a sort of scaffolding that enables remaking and use of these affordances (Ingold in Gunn 2008). As such, the exhibition has a potential of re-articulating the relations between makers, objects and audiences (Rogoff, 2006) and thus of not being defined by the boundaries of the physical space. In this way, meaning and knowledge can take place rather than be excavated, simply deposited and transferred through the labels' lessons and information.

While I have explored this potential of the exhibition space speculatively and conceptually, further concrete spatial exercises/experiments would be needed in order to understand how conventional exhibition spaces and museums could be critically reconstructed in order for performative space to take place. This might open up further

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121 The challenge of representing non-material aspects of work could be further explored through contemporary art practices that base their work on the process and are moving away from production of objects. As such they pose a challenge to conventional modes of documentation, dissemination and display. Therefore I believe that insights and research of this field could be also useful for expressing the intangible heritage in the tangible display of ethnographic collections. That being said, exploration of different ways to document, disseminate and display heritage need to be further investigated.

questions about how and on what levels collaboration can be established. What are the boundaries and challenges to this task, as well as the potentials and limits for the creation of a critical collective space? How are these spaces sustained over time? And what is it that sustains them? I am curious about what an exhibition could become if we think about it as a medium for creating a situation.[122] How might we think about exhibition/display as a practice engaged in spatial and temporal production, engaged with singularity and specificity, and open to contingency, chance and change that works in the midst of social, cultural, historical, political forces?[123]

The aim of this thesis overall is twofold: while exploring the design as methodology, I investigate museum territory in relation to cultural difference through a lens of intangible heritage; I also work toward foregrounding practical exploration as a valuable way of doing theory. I am interested in how a renewed sense of heritage can yield an opening for different ethical and aesthetical considerations in regards to how we represent things. In the end, I hope that my work adds a bit more thickness to understanding some aspects and possibilities

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122 Further research in areas of exhibition design would be useful to explore performative representational possibilities in different modes and media. The internship at the Getty Center design studio (LA, USA) 2014/15 and opportunity to work with the new media and applications in a concrete setting prompted my curiosity to explore possibilities of technology, new media, and installation art for performative exhibition spaces and expressing the relationship between tangible and intangible knowledges as a next step. This might also include exploring the ways in which exhibitions and other media can be designed to form and sustain active communities. It also might be useful to consider and research audience's perspectives and responses in this concrete setting.

123 These insights and exhibition possibilities are indebted to recent turns in contemporary curatorial and art practice (the discursive, the durational and the educational turns in contemporary curating and art). They shift understanding of the exhibition as a static form toward an understanding of the exhibition-as-medium, and the exhibition-as-form, while contesting their different durational dimensions and formats (From the curatorial weekend workshop *Our Day Will Come* by Paul O'Niell and Mick Wilson in organization of the Latitude 53 in Edmonton, July 2014).

of museum territory and exhibition/display design, and in so doing further makes visible the work that needs to be done.

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Ika Peraic | DVD Image List

peraic.01
View of the exhibition space, west-northwest wall
Date: 2014

peraic.02
View of the exhibition space, west-northwest wall
Date: 2014

peraic.03
View of the installation, west-northwest wall
'Exploring performative dimensions of a Cree walking stick'
Date: 2014
Wood, painted wood, red woolen thread
Dimensions vary

peraic.04
Detail of the installation
'Exploring performative dimensions of a Cree walking stick'
Date: 2014
Wood, painted wood, red woolen thread
Dimensions vary

peraic.05
Detail of the installation
'Exploring performative dimensions of a Cree walking stick'
Date: 2014
Wood, painted wood, red woolen thread
Dimensions vary

peraic.06
'A crack motif as a metaphor'
Date: 2014
Painted wood, soil, live plants
58 x 5 x 3.5 cm
52 x 5 x 3.5 cm
38 x 5 x 3.5 cm

peraic.07
View of the exhibition banners
Date: 2014

peraic.08
View of the exhibition space, west-northwest and north wall
Date: 2014

peraic.09
'Object/thing distinction' installation
Date: 2014
Painted wood, a string, black and white printout, a shelf
110 x 26 x 20 cm

peraic.010
'Object/thing distinction' installation
Date: 2014
Painted wood, a string, black and white printout, a shelf
110 x 26 x 20 cm

peraic.011
'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014
Painted wood, engraved wood, strings, L-hooks, a shelf, stretchy fabric, painted metal frame, 2 monitors and monitor masks
Dimensions vary

peraic.012
View of the 'Museum and cultural difference' and 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installations
Date: 2014

peraic.013
'Museum and cultural difference' installation
Date: 2014
Painted wood, engraved wood
50 x 5 x 4.5 cm

peraic.014
Detail of the 'Museum and cultural difference' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.015
Detail of the 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.016
Detail of the 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.017
Detail of the 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.018
Detail of the 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.019
Detail of the 'Museum/archive and museum/continuity' installation
Date: 2014

peraic.020
View of the exhibition space, east wall
Date: 2014

peraic.021
View of the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'

Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

peraic.022
View of the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'
Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

peraic.023
View of the intervention to the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'
Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

peraic.024
View of the intervention to the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'
Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

peraic.025
View of the intervention to the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'
Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

peraic.026
View of the installation 'Exploring the possibilities for a postcolonial museum'
Date: 2014
Exhibition poster, wood, painted wood, vinyl, red woolen thread, a shelf, L-hooks
Dimensions vary

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